The Study Bible

Edited By

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Central BAPTIST
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The
Study
Bible

THE STUDY BIBLE

Editor JOHN STIRLING

ST. MATTHEW

A Little Library of Exposition

with

New Studies

by

THE BISHOP OF RIPON

and

J. A. FINDLAY, M.A.

Professor of Didsbury College, Manchester

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TO THE READERS OF THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW

It is impossible to read far into this Gospel without being drawn by words of beatitude into the inner circle of discipleship to the Great Teacher. He speaks again in its pages. His words are not written, they are echoed with all the tender accents of appeal to all who devoutly listen. We are brought closely to Him. We sit at His feet. He opens to us with authority and affection the Kingdom of Heaven. We open our hearts. We learn of Him. We enter into His secret and with it into the possession of all the promises of God.

Many have taken up this book feeling it holds not only a precious memoir of Christ, but the Programme of Christianity. To discover this, and to learn its meaning for the human race, saints and scholars of all nations have opened its pages and studied its sentences. Such research and meditation make no small contribution to our search for the truth. We have, therefore, in this volume, brought together a selection of the great passages from the writings of these students of the Word, which illuminate the message of this Gospel, that the reader in his personal study may have the enlightenment and fellowship which these great minds offer.

27877

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An Appreciation

THE GOSPELS: WHY FOUR?

BY

THE BISHOP OF RIPON

THE
FIRST
STUDY

The Right Rev. E. A. Burroughs, D.D. (Oxon), Hon. D.D. St. Andrews, Lord Bishop of Ripon. Author of *The Valley of Decision*, *A Faith for the Firing Line*, *The Fight for the Future*, *The Way of Peace*, *World Builders All*, etc. Editor of *Education and Religion*. Contributor to *Towards Reunion*, *Liberal Evangelicalism*, *The Inner Life*, etc.

THE GOSPELS: WHY FOUR?

By the Bishop of Ripon

ONE at least of the early Fathers of the Christian Church had no doubt or difficulty about the answer. Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons in the last part of the second century A.D., goes so far as to claim that "it is impossible that the Gospels should be in number either more or fewer" than four. "For since there are four regions of the world in which we are, and four principal winds, and the Church is as seed sown in the whole earth, and the Gospel is the Church's pillar and ground, and the breath of life: it is natural that it should have four pillars, from all quarters . . . kindling men into life. Whereby it is evident that the Artificer of all things, the Word, . . . gave us His Gospel in four forms, kept together by one Spirit. . . . For indeed the Cherubim had four faces, and their faces are images of the dispensation of the Son of God."[1] The incidental witness to the wide dispersal of the Church even then, and to the conviction of the early Christians that "the Gospel is the Church's pillar and ground," makes the passage interesting; but as an answer to our question, quite plainly its *a priori* argument cuts no ice.

I

In point of fact, the curious claim is due to an effort made, a generation before, by a famous and quite estimable heretic, the Gnostic Marcion, to reduce the four Gospels to one. His experiment proves that, even then, men had realised the inconvenience of having four distinct versions of one story, the truth of which was vital to that new outlook on life which we

[1] *Adv. Haer.* iii. 11, 8.

call the Christian faith. For even superficial study reveals that in some quite important details they clash with one another, and closer inspection shows that at least two, the Third and Fourth Gospels, are deliberately criticising and supplementing versions of events which we find in the First and Second. At a time when the Church was committed to the task of converting the Roman Empire, animated as it then was by the subtle Greek intellect, to the belief that Jesus was the Son—the supreme and authentic self-manifestation—of God, it was awkward to be brought up against quite serious discrepancies in her own records of His life and words.

Recall at the start a few of these discrepancies, such as even a casual reading reveals. Apart from the complete divergence of the two genealogies of our Lord, in St. Matthew and St. Luke, their two narratives of His birth, though not inconsistent, seem to reach us from two different worlds. And why do the other two Gospels say nothing about it? Then, if there is one point more than another where we might expect accurate and harmonious witness, it is in the form of what all the world now knows as "The Lord's Prayer." Yet the same two Gospels, in giving it, give it in curiously different forms (Matt. vi. 9–13, Luke xi. 2–4; see R.V.) as well as in different contexts.[1]

Again, the very large proportion of their space devoted by all the four Evangelists to the story of the Passion makes it the stranger that no two give the same version of the Words from the Cross; and it is

1 The form in St. Luke would be even more different from our familiar version but for the tendency to "correct" MSS. which preserved what scholars now regard as the original Lucan form. The fact that our Lord evidently gave the same teaching repeatedly accounts for the different contexts, but makes more noticeable the divergence of form.

only by putting the four narratives together that we make their number seven. And here we are taking no account of the very deep cleavage between the first three Gospels and the Fourth, in which, apart from a different outlook and approach, there is a radically different chronological scheme.

The disadvantage of all this, from the point of view of propaganda, is obvious enough. If the coming of Jesus Christ was indeed a stepping down of God Himself on to the stage of human history, to complete the self-revelation begun " in many fragments and various ways " in the Old Testament, one might have expected such a divinely ordered record of the event as would have left the world in no doubt—such a record, in fact, as our forefathers thought they had in the New Testament before we were compelled to face the facts which modern scholarship has underlined. One can appreciate what prompted Marcion to pin his faith to St. Luke and St. Paul, ignoring the others, and later on (in the same period as Irenæus) led Tatian to produce a " Harmony of the Four Gospels," in which one continuous narrative is made by the method of scissors and paste: which " Harmony " for some centuries almost superseded the original Gospels in public worship in certain parts of the Christian world.

II

To-day, however, and on looking deeper, we can see real advantages in what actually happened, and, in particular, a real harmony between the plan and method of the Incarnation itself and the form in which the record of it has come down. Throughout His life, our Lord is most careful not to impose belief in that view

of Himself on which the success of His mission depended. His personality was like His parables: a form of teaching out of which men would get just what they brought to the study of it. "According to your faith be it unto you" is the foundation principle of His Kingdom; and where there is demonstration there cannot be faith. Instead of making claims, He puts questions, which men have to answer for themselves. And when at last, at Cæsarea Philippi, Peter gave the answer to which all His teaching had been working up, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God," our Lord characteristically goes on to fill in the outline thus suggested with features (including the Cross) quite inconsistent with the picture emerging in Peter's mind. For him and the others, the goal just touched becomes the starting-point for a fresh voyage of discovery. On almost the last page of the record we are shown the state of mind induced by His peculiar method of revealing God to man in the confession of the two disciples walking to Emmaus (Luke xxiv. 21): "We hoped that it was He which should redeem Israel." In other words, they had identified Him as the expected Redeemer; but as to the whole meaning and means of redemption they were still at sea.

Such being the method adopted in the life which was supremely to reveal God to man, it would have been strange, especially to modern eyes, accustomed by science to trace the same patterns through the whole of existence, if the record of that revelation had followed different lines, or resembled a demonstration to reason rather than a challenge to faith. From this angle, the seeming handicap proves to be a help. And when we follow modern critical study into the details

of the records we possess, this help grows more and more considerable. What at first might look like a confusing promiscuity of witnesses, whose convergence and divergence follows no plan, proves to be a remarkable group whose differences and mutual dependence alike work out to "the confirmation of the Gospel." We cannot follow Irenæus in his enthusiasm for the mystical number four. But we can say that *the four we have*, being what they are, and read in the light of what can be deduced from critical comparisons of their contents, provide a far more satisfying documentary substructure for the faith of a modern Christian than could be found either in a single authoritative Gospel or in such a "Harmony" of the existing Gospels as satisfied the faith of less critical days.

III

How the particular selection which we call "Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John" came to survive, we can only surmise. What is clear from the books themselves is that they represent a fraction only of the early literature of our Lord's life, to say nothing of the mass of oral tradition which that literature sought to perpetuate. St. Luke's preface speaks of "many" having "taken in hand" the same task as he now proposes to do better himself. In St. John we not only have clear evidence of a "postscript to a later edition" (chap. xxi.), but both the "first edition" and the postscript end with pointed statements to the effect that the volume represents a selection only from a vast mass of relevant material, and a selection made "with a purpose." Mark has actually lost its original ending (which Canon Streeter thinks has influenced

the postscript to John [1]), and there is evidence to show that his whole Gospel might very well have been lost in the same way as the document known to scholars as "Q," which the writers of the First and Third Gospels had before them. Even in those early days it was noticed that practically all the Second Gospel can be found in either the First or the Third, or both, and Mark suffered a long period of neglect which, incidentally, has helped to preserve the purity of his text. Moreover, both Matthew and Luke "improve upon and refine Mark's version" (Streeter, *op. cit.*, p. 162) in both style and substance, Luke adding a wealth of new incidents, and Matthew a similar wealth of teaching which Mark either misses or gives in much briefer form.

Anyhow, we may well see in the survival of what we do possess a divine providence far greater than the provision of one standard and unquestioned Gospel would have been; and a glance at any of the "Apocryphal Gospels" is enough to show why we distinguish our own Gospels from them as "inspired." The consistency, purity, and uniqueness of the portrait which they exist to frame becomes the more remarkable when we realise what, in these four Gospels, we have before us. They are not the simple productions of men never at more than one remove from the Master

[1] *The Four Gospels*, pp. 351 *sqq.* Let me take this opportunity both of disclaiming any independent right to treat of the questions dealt with in that monumental and fascinating work, and of acknowledging my indebtedness to it throughout this article. Without such independent study as, frankly, has not been mine, one has no right either to agree with Canon Streeter's conclusions on particular points or to differ from them; but, for the purposes of my present argument, it is not the theories that matter, but the facts and the presentation of them, and these I have been content to take as I find them in his book, much of which would fascinate even the reader who has no theological equipment.

Himself, inspired to write each his own reminiscences, but the results (except in the case of Mark) of comparing and collating, with different aims and standards in mind, literary sources, themselves of varying value and differing contents. And these go back, sometimes separate, sometimes blending, to the period when the world's only knowledge of our Lord was what His first followers told about Him by word of mouth. The very discrepancies resulting, thanks to the devoted study lavished upon "the Synoptic problem" by scholars—itself a tribute to the all-importance of what the Gospels contain—have given us a clearer view of *how the Gospels came into being* than any previous age enjoyed. And the latest phase of this study, as represented by Canon Streeter's book, brings out one thing especially, viz. that the *independent* lines of tradition stretching back into the "oral period" just referred to are more numerous, and more reliable, than an earlier generation of "Higher Critics" realised.[1] It all means that the Church of to-day, if it will but study what *The Four Gospels* imply, can have a more satisfying, if less simple, conviction than ever before, of "the certainty concerning those things wherein we were instructed."[2]

Thus, if we look at our question, "Why *four* Gospels?" from the angle of the providential purpose of God, who is revealing Himself (according to the Christian claim) both in the records and in the life recorded, the multiplicity of evidence proves to be altogether gain, and a gain which would have remained

1 Canon Streeter's great positive contribution is the establishment of "Proto-Luke" as a source distinct from both Mark and "Q," and as reliable as either, while he gives reasons for regarding our "Mark" as the original, and not a later edition of a similar "Proto-Mark."

2 Luke i. 4.

as " treasure hid in a field " if the challenge of the discrepancies had not driven men to dig for it. The proved independence of the three principal sources underlying Matthew, Mark, and Luke—for I venture to think Canon Streeter proves his case for the last-named—means that *each one* of the contributions can be considered as essentially primitive. And though the Fourth Gospel is regarded as, for historical purposes, in a separate class, representing an exposition rather than a record of facts, the most recent theories of its origin pay the highest respect to those particular bits of " record," so full of local colour and so pointedly given, which are peculiar to this Gospel and look like a deliberate correction, by one who spoke with authority, of the rest. Briefly, the Fourth Gospel shows us that there was " another side " to our Lord's life and ministry, as well as another way of regarding His Person, from those which the Synoptists give. There was, that is, a ministry at Jerusalem as well as in Galilee, and a separate entourage of disciples there, mostly secret, like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea ; and of this Jerusalem ministry we should know next to nothing if it were not for " St. John." We can still say with Hippolytus, a Roman theologian of A.D. 200, that " though various elements are taught in the several books of the Gospel, yet it makes no difference to the faith of believers, since by one guiding Spirit all things are declared in all of them." [1]

IV

But though we cannot answer the question why just these four Gospels survived, we can tell a good

[1] Quoted by Streeter, *op. cit.*, p. 439.

deal as to how there came to be different (and, in some sense, rival) traditions, and where each tradition had its source and seat. When the persecution recorded in Acts viii. scattered the very large company of Christians already organised in Jerusalem (cf. Acts vi. 7), they all "went about preaching the word" up and down the Mediterranean world, so, incidentally, preparing the way for St. Paul. But, in the nature of things, groups which settled in different centres would have more or less different selections of reminiscences of our Lord, and no documents that could claim in any sense to be official. The oral teaching would inevitably be written down, and written differently in different places. As Christians visited one another, they would supplement each other's store, and so gradually build up a larger *corpus* of written tradition, at least at the important centres. But local differences would remain, and, when the day came for the composition of our Gospels, a trained intellect like St. Luke would find himself compelled, as his preface states, to choose critically between rival versions, among which *one* local written record would probably provide his ground-plan.

Briefly, the view put forward by Canon Streeter is as follows. Mark represents the Gospel according to the Church at Rome about A.D. 65, and there is no reason to doubt the familiar tradition, given by Papias (between 135 and 165) and Irenæus, that it contains the reminiscences of St. Peter, and the substance of his missionary preaching, written down "accurately" but not "in order." (That is, even then there was a feeling that Mark's chronology could not stand against that of the others, where they differed from him.) It is probably to its connection with the Church of the

capital that we owe the preservation of Mark at all. "It is the Gospel least valued, least quoted, and most rarely commented on by the Fathers. Augustine can even venture to speak of Mark as 'a sort of lackey and abridger of Matthew.'" [1] Till Jerome's Vulgate, the Western Church even transposed John and Mark in the order of the four. For one thing, of its 661 verses, 600 are reproduced in substance in Matthew, and both Matthew and Luke, when reproducing, improve the style. Yet "Mark preserves a number of small details omitted or blurred in the other Gospels, which, to the historical instinct of the twentieth century, are of the utmost interest" [2]; and there is a native vividness which confirms for the ordinary man the decision of the scholars that in Mark's narrative we get nearest of all to the events themselves, and, in that respect, it is the most important of the four.

Matthew similarly represents the tradition of the great Church of Antioch, the second metropolis of Christendom when persecution scattered it from Jerusalem, about A.D. 85. As we should expect, it shows Jewish influence at its maximum. Our present Gospel owes its form to a conflation of Mark with "Q"—a collection chiefly of the sayings and teaching of our Lord—and another document, known as "M," which embodied the special emphasis of the Church of Jerusalem, the headquarters of the "Judaising" section of Christendom with which St. Paul was so often at war.

The writer's first care is to set forth the genealogy of Jesus, tracing His sonship of David and Abraham, while St. Luke carries the line back to "Adam, which

[1] Streeter, *op. cit.*, p. 10.
[2] *Ibid.*

was the son of God." One of his most characteristic devices is quotation from the Hebrew prophets to establish a point of contact between our Lord and what went before: "that it might be fulfilled." And the literalness of his attitude to Jewish Apocalyptic, the mould in which religious thought in Palestine was cast in the age just before Jesus Christ, is perhaps responsible for the rather disparaging tone of Papias's cryptic sentence: "So then Matthew composed the oracles (*τὰ λόγια*) in the Hebrew tongue, and each one interpreted them as he could."[1] Still, our "Matthew"—clearly not the volume Papias refers to as "the oracles"—seems to represent a mediating position, that of Peter after his emancipation from his Jewish scruples rather than that associated with James, the first Bishop of Jerusalem. It would be designed to help this original nucleus of the Church to adapt itself, after the fall of Jerusalem, to the changed world in which they found themselves. For the evidence for this theory the reader must refer to Canon Streeter (chap. xiii).

Luke, which differs from Matthew in being "signed"—its preface and that of the Acts identify the author of both as one man, and critical scholarship has overwhelmingly endorsed the ancient tradition which assigns both to St. Luke, St. Paul's companion—was, as we have seen, chosen by Marcion the Gnostic as the Gospel which ought to hold the field alone. It most closely accorded with the teaching of St. Paul, whom Marcion (like certain modern critics) regarded as the only true interpreter of Christ, and the second

1 Papias is quoting "John the Elder, the disciple of the Lord," now generally regarded as the most likely author of the Fourth Gospel; and the Fourth Gospel sweeps away the whole of the apocalyptic "oracles" and substitutes the coming of the "Comforter" for the Second Coming of Christ.

founder of Christianity. This in itself suggests that we shall find Luke contrasting vividly with Matthew, in which Jewish Christianity makes its last stand. It is the Gospel according to a Gentile, as well as for the Gentiles. Though it is impossible to unravel the rival theories as to where it was written (beyond the fact that the materials were probably collected, years before, at Cæsarea, when St. Luke stayed there during St. Paul's two years in prison), there is good reason to think that, like the Acts, it was intended chiefly for Rome and the Roman world. ("Theophilus," addressed as "Your Excellency," was probably a high Roman official, discreetly renamed.) Anyhow, Luke represents a purpose and method, as well as an outlook, entirely different from that of Matthew, and a stage much further along the road than Mark.[1]

If Mark, as a "biographical Gospel," was a new thing, compared with the "collections" of sayings, etc., which alone (apparently) existed till then, Matthew is mostly Mark republished with considerable additions and a particular colouring. But Luke is a new thing again: at once an attempt at scientific history, in almost the modern sense, and a work of art. The origin of Matthew (as scholars explain it) accounts for "the curious mixture of Judaistic with universalistic sayings": it "has more of an official quality, less literary freedom"; while Luke "bears the impress of an individuality," and one with a conscious purpose

1 Take two statistical illustrations. Mark, representing the oral teaching of the Jew, St. Peter, contains eight Aramaic words. Matthew preserves only one (Golgotha) and gives the *Hebrew* form of another (Eli for Eloï). Luke sweeps them all away. St. Paul's favourite term for Christ, "the Lord" (ὁ Κύριος), occurs fourteen or fifteen times in Luke, but never in Matthew or Mark (Streeter, *op. cit.*, pp. 164, 212).

and a coherent point of view.[1] Apart from the preface, in perfect literary Greek, and the minutely careful notes of *secular* chronology in ii. 1–2 and iii. 1–2, the new orientation is at once indicated by two points which probably few readers realise as significant. First, the quotation from Isaiah, connected, in all four Gospels, with the mission of John the Baptist,[2] is given by St. Luke in a greatly extended form, though *he never again quotes the Old Testament* except when its words are used by our Lord Himself. Why? Clearly to reach (iii. 6) the great "universalistic" climax which the two Jewish Gospels omit: "And *all flesh* shall see the salvation of God." In chap. iv., when, after the Temptation narrative, he begins the record of the public ministry, he deliberately postpones the opening incidents of Mark and Matthew to one which only he gives in any detail—the visit to and rejection at Nazareth.[3] That he knew it was not first in time is shown by our Lord's own reference to miracles *already worked* at Capernaum (iv. 23). It is put first for its significance from the writer's point of view, a significance brought out by our Lord's Old Testament illustrations, in His "sermon," of how, even then, God had passed over Jews to go to the Gentiles; and it was this which called out the fury of the Nazarenes. Later in the same chapter he joins up again with Mark i.

Of the vast problem of the authorship, origin, purpose, and historical value of the Fourth Gospel it is impossible in our space to write at all. But, just as

1 Cf. Streeter, *op. cit.*, p. 269, and also the summary of Lucan characteristics on p. 220.

2 Mark i. 2 quaintly (and characteristically, if we accept the traditional view of its origin) mixes up a verse quoted from Malachi with the usual passage from Isa. xl.

3 It appears in Mark vi. and Matt. xiii.

Luke represents a stage on from Mark and Matthew, as a narrative shaped and stamped by the convictions of a notable personality, so John represents a further advance along the same line. St. Luke was as much preoccupied to make the narrative complete and reliable as to bring out the universality of our Lord's mission and appeal. The writer of the Fourth Gospel is less concerned with the incidents recorded than with the inner significance of the Person who appears in them and by them stands self-revealed. And whereas St. Luke only had the issue between St. Paul and the Judaisers in view, in the Fourth Gospel that controversy is almost eclipsed by the emergence of the Gnostic heresies with which St. Paul's later epistles also deal. If Matthew represents the local Gospel of Antioch, and Mark the original local Gospel of Rome, John appears to be that of Ephesus, the metropolis of Asia Minor and the meeting-point of Greek and Oriental forms of thought. On the other hand, the original Jewish element is still strong, both in the minutiæ of topographical description, etc., showing first-hand knowledge of Palestine before the fall of Jerusalem, and in the Hebrew insistence on the personality of God. To quote Canon Streeter once more: "The interpretative fusion of Greek philosophic mysticism with the conception of a personal God reached by the Hebrew prophets, modified by the religious experience of the Early Church, obtained its classical expression in the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel." [1]

V

Thus we can see more and more reasons for a multiplicity of Gospels, rather than a single "author-

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 374.

ised version." It not only broadens the basis of our faith, and harmonises with the method of our Lord's life and teaching, but shows how God allows His plan for the revelation of Himself to be modified by natural human circumstances and to adapt itself to changing human needs. Geography, psychology, and contemporary thought all play their part. And here there is a suggestion that perhaps gives such a study a more direct practical bearing on one great problem of the Church to-day—the problem of our persistent Christian divisions. Not only is it reassuring to find that clear-cut uniformity and unquestionable "authority" are evidently not a part of the method of God, but the particular contrasts already noted in the four Gospels we possess seem to fit very closely with contrasted traditions in the Church.

First comes Mark, with his vividness, his closeness to the simple original facts, his indifference to arrangement, and to a philosophic background for his message. He echoes the simple approach of St. Peter to the task of preaching the Lord whom he loved but had denied. His Gospel is a missionary's handbook, put together for the practical purposes of the mission-field. He scorns a preface and plunges right in: "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." At the same time his work underlies both Matthew and Luke, though used by each in a different way. Can we fail to see in Mark the representative of the evangelical tradition, the simplest and most fundamental of the ways of placing the figure of Jesus Christ before the world? By common admission, a strong leaven of "the Gospel message" and the "passion for souls" is essential in any other presentation, whether "High" or "Broad," if by it souls are to be saved. Mark,

though he has his periods of eclipse, always proves indispensable in the end, and vindicates his independent right to survival. But, as plainly, had the presentation of Jesus Christ never gone beyond the stage represented by Mark, it is unlikely that the great organised fellowship of Christendom, with its world-wide ambitions, would have been evolved, or could have conquered the Roman Empire; and it is still less likely that his Gospel, undeveloped, could have subjugated the Greek mind and shown the relevance of Christ to human culture.

Matthew, again, with his leaning to the past, his emphasis on the "succession from the patriarchs" in which Christ stood, his conviction that even the words and actions of our Lord stood to gain by being shown to have Old Testament "authority" behind them, and the literalism of His adherence to that particular mode of thought and speech prevailing in the Jewish world when Christ was born, corresponds with what we know as the "Catholic" outlook. Just as, in the first century, the ingrained national loyalty of the Jew to his theocratic state, even though a vassal of Rome, gave the Christian Church a similar vital sense of its own corporate unity, as Christ's "Kingdom not of this world," which meant everything for its permanence in the age of experiment and the age of persecution which cover the first three centuries A.D., so it has been with the Catholic emphasis on corporate loyalty and the instinctive resistance of the Catholic mind to "secular" interference in spiritual things. And just as the rooted Jewish belief in the unity and personality of God saved the Christian faith from yielding to the seductive speculations of the Gnostics, so the Catholic insistence on orthodoxy and tradition, as embodied in the Creeds

of the Church, has been a source of strength and steadiness in times when thought is on the move. Matthew has his permanent place among the Evangelists, though he reflects a phase of the blending of Judaism with Christianity which was only transient; and so too the Catholic temper and outlook has its permanent function in the Christian Church.

But, over against Matthew, we must always set Luke; and we must see that both are built on a foundation of Mark. If Matthew stands for the Catholic approach to the fundamental Gospel of life, Luke is the Broad Churchman—in the best sense, the Modernist—among the Evangelists. Look back at the characterisation of his Gospel already given, and see how it fits in. He whose genealogy is traced by Matthew only to Abraham, that He may be claimed as "100 per cent. a Jew," is presented by Luke as "the son of Adam, the son of God." The first emphasis now is on the universality of the Gospel, the all-inclusiveness of the Kingdom of God, the unexpectedness of the Divine operations, and the unimportance of privilege, religious or social. If in Matthew we get the mind of an official, in Luke it is an individual who speaks, claiming his own right, as such, to present the Gospel as it came to him. And, being a man of education, moving among men whose minds were also of the questioning rather than of the submissive sort, he recognises the importance of the appeal to the intellect and the appeal to the æsthetic instinct. He shows that he has sifted his authorities, and he produces a work of art.

And what of John? I can only throw out the suggestion, in closing, that in him we get a hint of the intended synthesis of the other three traditions, in that

higher unity which we know (not least from the Fourth Gospel) to be essential to a true expression of the Being of God. "That they all may be one"—the reference is to the future converts of the first Apostles, including you and me—"even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, . . . that they may be one, even as We are one."[1] And the unity of the Godhead is a unity of "Three in One and One in Three." It looks as if we might almost go back to the quaint claim of Irenæus from which we set out, and make it our own in a deeper sense. Why four Gospels? At any rate, from the point of view just suggested, there seems to be a permanent message to the Church of Christ, both in the inspired divergences of the first three Gospels, so suggestive of those between the three great traditions within the Church, and in the way in which the Fourth Gospel, without superseding them, leaves them all behind. For, starting from "the Word made flesh" which "dwelt among us," it reveals the Greater Christ into whom we have to "grow up in all things" under the guidance of His Spirit, and whose manifestation to the universe depends on the unity, the purity, and the universality of His Church.

[1] John xvii. 20–22.

Were we to consider the respective styles of the Evangelists, as a matter of human composition, St. Matthew's Gospel is characterised by precept, St. Luke's by narrative, St. Mark's by human incident, and St. John's by doctrine.—I. WILLIAMS.

The battle of Christianity, and with it of all revealed religion, must be fought on the field of the Fourfold Gospel.—D. BROWN.

The four Gospels, in their essential unity and harmony, and in their fourfold difference and contrast, illustrate at once and equally well the wonders of the divine love and the comprehensiveness of the divine plan—a love reaching out after and laying hold of all the great classes of men to be found in the race ; a plan comprehending and providing for the spiritual wants of all men to the end of time.

GREGORY THE GREAT.

The Gospels are more than individual books, and cannot be treated adequately as independent literary units.—H. S. NASH.

This is the Gospel of Jesus as the Messiah. Throughout, the work of Christ is regarded as the accomplishment of Prophecy.—FARRAR.

The history of Jesus, as delivered by Matthew, is at the same time the fulfilment and the transformation of all history. If that Evangelist has given us chiefly the History of the Gospel, he has also furnished the Gospel of History.—LANGE.

The Christ of Matthew's Gospel is by no means a Messiah according to the ordinary popular Jewish conceptions. The delineation appears rather in opposition to what was false in the Jewish notions; still, the Apostle presents Him in Jewish garb, though in common with the other Apostles he recognises in Jesus the Son of God.—OLSHAUSEN.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Drawn from many sources to illustrate the great Texts and Teaching of the Book

ALTHOUGH THIS LITTLE VOLUME contains quotations from the writings of men who differ widely in their method of interpreting the New Testament, it will be found that the selected passages present a consistent picture of the One who draws all men to Him. By many ways they come, from many nations and speaking many tongues, but it is the same Lord they meet. They sit at the feet of their common Master. And if there is diversity, in their adoration of His glory, and in their interpretation of His teaching, there is fellowship in His Spirit, and united devotion to the Faith His presence inspires. This collection of reflections and meditations, therefore, is not so much a chain of quotations as a circle of friendship, where men share, in truth of intercourse, the communion of saints. In the company are the successors of the Apostles. There are great Fathers like CHRYSOSTOM, whose eloquent expositions of the truth drew all Constantinople to his pulpit and whose protest against unrighteousness in high places drove him into exile; JEROME, the great Christian scholar, who gave the Latin Church its authorised version of the Scriptures; AUGUSTINE, the father of medieval Catholicism and the theology of the Western Church. There are Schoolmen like THOMAS AQUINAS, and mystics like THOMAS À KEMPIS. There are the leaders of the Reformation, ERASMUS, LUTHER, MELANCHTHON, and CALVIN. And in the circle which widens with the centuries, there are our own famous countrymen—men like WILLIAM LAW and JEREMY TAYLOR, whose devotional and practical studies of the Christian Life have a world-wide reputation; HOOKER and STANLEY; NEWMAN and KEBLE; and others whose lives no less than their words have illuminated our knowledge of the Divine Revelation. If the circle includes some names not distinguished for religious writing, but honoured by the world for service in other fields, it is because they pay tribute to our Lord.

ST. MATTHEW

THE COMING OF THE KING

"IN THESE LAST DAYS"

But when he thought on these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name JESUS; *for it is he that shall save his people from their sins.*
Matt. I. 20–21.

IT is acknowledged by all students of the subject that the Hebrew prophets made predictions concerning the fortunes of their own and other countries which were unquestionably fulfilled. It is a simple and universally recognised fact that, filled with these prophetic images, the whole Jewish nation—nay, at last the whole Eastern world—did look forward with longing expectation to the coming of this future Conqueror. Was this unparalleled expectation realised? There did arise out of this nation a Character by universal consent as unparalleled as the expectation which had preceded Him. Jesus of Nazareth was, on the most superficial no less than on the deepest view we take of His coming, the greatest name, the most extraordinary power, that has ever crossed the stage of history. And this greatness consisted, not in outward power, but precisely in those qualities on which from first to last the prophetic order had laid the utmost stress—justice and love, goodness and truth.—DEAN STANLEY.

He came—the soul most full of love, the most sacredly virtuous, the most deeply inspired by God and by the future, that men have yet seen on earth: Jesus. He bent over the corpse of the dead world and whispered a word of faith. Over the clay that had lost all of man but the movement and the form,

He uttered words until then unknown, *love*, *sacrifice*, *a heavenly origin*. And the dead arose. A new life circulated through the clay which philosophy had in vain tried to reanimate. From that corpse arose the Christian world of liberty and equality. From that clay arose the true Man, the image of God, the precursor of humanity.—MAZZINI.

Supposing one single man to have left a book of predictions concerning Jesus Christ as to the time and manner of His coming, and supposing Him to have come agreeably to these predictions, the argument would be of almost infinite force ; yet here the evidence is stronger beyond all comparison ; a succession of men for the space of four thousand years follow one another, without interruption or variation, in foretelling the same great event. A whole people are the harbingers of the Messiah, and such a people as subsisted four thousand years to testify in a general body their assured hope and expectation, from which no severity of threats or persecutions could oblige them to depart. This is a case which challengeth in a far more transcendent degree our assent and wonder.—PASCAL.

In old times God was known by names of power, of nature, of majesty ; but His name of Mercy was reserved till now, when God did propose to pour out the whole treasure of His mercy by the ministry and mediation of His Holy Son.—JEREMY TAYLOR.

What profits it that Christ is born,
And bringeth childhood back to men,
Unless our long-lost right we mourn,
And win through penitence again,
And lead a God-like life on earth,
As children of the second birth ?

Lyra Germanica.

TRIBUTE OF THE NATIONS

And when they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And they came into the house and saw the young child with Mary his mother; and they fell down and worshipped him; and opening their treasures they offered unto him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.
Matt. II. 10-11.

SO ends all that we know of the visit of the Magi. St. Matthew, writing for Hebrews, recorded it apparently as testifying to the kingly character of Jesus. Christendom, however, has rightly seen in it a yet deeper significance, and the "wise men" have been regarded as the first-fruits of the outlying heathen world, the earnest of the future ingathering. Among all the festivals that enter into the Christmas cycle, none has made so deep an impression on Christian feeling, poetry, and art as the Epiphany, or "Manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles."

E. H. PLUMPTRE.

Christ is wont to catch every man in the way of his own craft—magicians with a star, fishers with fish.

CHRYSOSTOM.

Prepare for Him your gold in alms, and your frankincense in devotion, and your myrrh in a life of Christian severity.—AUGUSTINE.

We offer gold if we shine in His sight with the light of wisdom; we offer frankincense if we have power before God by the sweet savour of our prayers; we offer myrrh when we mortify by abstinence the lusts of the flesh.—GREGORY THE GREAT.

Where Christ is, there is the star. For He is the bright and morning star; therefore doth He make Himself known by His own light, and guide those who seek to know the truth, into full knowledge of it.

CORN. À LAPIDE.

THE ROYAL ABODE

And being warned of God in a dream, he withdrew into the parts of Galilee, and came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth.

Matt. II. 22-23.

ALMOST in the centre of the northern chain of hills there is a singular cleft in the limestone, forming the entrance to a little valley. Gradually the valley opens into a little natural amphitheatre of hills, supposed by some to be the crater of an extinct volcano ; and there, clinging to the hollows of a hill, which rises to the height of some five hundred feet above it, lie, " like a handful of pearls in a goblet of emerald," the flat roofs and narrow streets of a small Eastern town, and that little town is Nazareth.—FARRAR.

St. Matthew does not, as before, cite the words of any one prophet by name, but says generally that what he quotes had been spoken by or through the prophets. No such words are to be found in the Old Testament. It is not likely the true explanation is to be found in the impression made on his mind by the verbal coincidence of fact with prediction. He had heard men speak with scorn of " the Nazarene," and yet the very syllables of that word had also fallen on his ears in one of the most glorious of the prophecies admitted to be Messianic—" There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a *netzer* (branch) shall grow out of his roots " (Isa. xi. 1). So he found in the word of scorn the *nomen et omen* of glory. The town of Nazareth probably took its name from this meaning of the word, as pointing, like our *-hurst* and *-holt*, to the trees and shrubs for which it was conspicuous.

E. H. PLUMPTRE.

A branch in bloom.—ANON.

THE INAUGURATION OF THE KINGDOM

THE ROYAL HERALD

And in those days cometh John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judæa, saying, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.
Matt. III. 1.

HE knew that the highest truth of spiritual life was to be given by One that should come after. What he had learned in the desert was contained in a few words: Reality lies at the root of religious life. Ye must be real, said John. "Bring forth fruits meet for repentance." Let each man do his own duty; let the rich impart to those who are not rich; let the publican accuse no man falsely; let the soldier be content with his wages. The coming kingdom is not a mere piece of machinery which will make you all good and happy without effort of your own. Change yourselves, or you will have no kingdom at all. Personal reformation, personal reality, *that* was John's message to the world.—F. W. ROBERTSON.

By "the way of the Lord and its paths" he signifies the souls to whom the word of the evangel was to come. These he exhorts to prepare for it by cleansing with the discipline of penitence, plucking up the thorns of worldly affections, and casting forth the stones of sin, thus making the heart soft and fit for its reception.—EUTHYMIUS.

As bodily fire wasteth all bodily things that may be wasted, so spiritual fire, that is God, wasteth all manner of sin where it falleth, and therefore our Lord is likened unto a fire wasting. I pray thee nourish this fire that is naught else but love and charity.

HYLTON.

The confession of evil works is the first beginning of good works.—AUGUSTINE.

A KINGLY EXAMPLE

Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to the Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.
Matt. III. 13.

FROM that moment He became the organ of the Holy Spirit, not merely so far as He was personally concerned, but also as fully realising His mediatorial character and work, and its relation to the salvation of mankind. But this fullness of the Spirit remained still concealed under the form of a servant, and in the lowliness of His walk and work. It was only after the work had been finished and accepted that the Spirit was poured out in all His fullness upon His believing people; and the dove, which had erst descended into His heart, issued forth to move and to brood over the waters of the nations of the earth.—LANGE.

The quiet flight and the resting dove betokened no rushing torrent of inspiration, no sudden seizure of the Spirit, but a uniform unfolding of the life of God, the loftiness yet the calm repose of a nature itself divine, the indwelling of the Spirit so that He could impart it to others, and without limitation fill them completely with it.—NEANDER.

Christ shows us that all righteousness is fulfilled in our having true humility.—AUGUSTINE.

Therefore the dove also appears, not bearing an olive branch, but pointing out to us our Deliverer from all evils, and suggesting the gracious hopes. For not from out of an ark doth she lead one man only, but the whole world she leads up into heaven at her appearing, and instead of a branch of peace from an olive, she conveys the Adoption to all the world's offspring in common.—CHRYSOSTOM.

GIRDING FOR SERVICE

Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

Matt. IV. 1.

THE Temptation was real, not a mere semblance. Our Lord, under stress of genuine temptation, had to win the victory in man and for man, by evincing self-denial, self-control, disregard for selfish advantage; absolute renunciation of power, honour, and self-gratification; and complete self-surrender to His Heavenly Father's will. If the struggle had not been an actual struggle, there would have been no significance in the victory. The Gospels represent Jesus as subject to temptations from without, not only at this crisis, but during all His life. He said to Peter, "Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art a *stumbling-block* unto Me"; and He said to His Apostles, "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations." The only difference between the temptations of Christ and our own is that His came from without, but ours come also from within.—FARRAR.

To convert the hard, stony life of duty into the comfort and enjoyment of this life; to barter, like Esau, life for pottage; to use divine powers in Him only to procure bread of earth;—To distrust God, and try impatiently some wild, sudden plan, instead of His meek and slow-appointed ways; to cast Himself from the temple, as we dash ourselves against our destiny;—To do homage to the majesty of wrong; to worship evil for the sake of success; making the world His own by force or by crooked policy, instead of suffering: These were the temptations of His life, as they are of ours. All trial is reducible to one or other of these three forms.—F. W. ROBERTSON.

ON THE THRESHOLD

From that time began Jesus to preach, and to say, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Matt. IV. 17.

CHRIST, our blessed Saviour, forbore to preach and teach until the thirtieth year of His age, neither would He openly be heard; no, though He beheld and heard so many impieties, abominable idolatries, heresies, blasphemings of God. It was a wonderful thing He could abstain, and with patience endure them until the time came that He was to appear in His office of preaching.—LUTHER.

So worthy a part of Divine service we should greatly wrong, if we did not esteem preaching as the blessed ordinance of God; sermons are keys to the Kingdom of heaven, as wings to the soul, as spurs to the good affections of man; unto the sound and healthy as food; as physic unto minds diseased by sin or distressed by sorrow.—HOOKER.

As to the nature of this kingdom, even to His closest followers, His language was most perplexing and contradictory. An unworldly kingdom, a moral dominion, a purely religious community, held together only by the bond of common faith, was so unlike the former intimate union of civil and religious polity, so opposite to the first principles of their theocracy, as to be utterly unintelligible. The real nature and design of the new religion seemed altogether beyond their comprehension. And it is not remarkable to trace it as it slowly dawned on the minds of the Apostles themselves, and gradually, after the death of Jesus, extended its horizon till it comprehended all mankind within its expanding view.—MILMAN.

THE CALL TO SERVICE

And walking by the sea of Galilee, he saw two brethren, Simon who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men.

Matt. IV. 18–19.

THE command came to those who were not unprepared. Short as it was, it was in some sense the first parable in our Lord's teaching, the germ of an actual parable (Matt. xiii. 47). It suggested a whole circle of thoughts. The sea is the troubled and evil world (Isa. lvii. 20), and the souls of men are the fish that have to be caught and taken from it, and the net is the Church of Christ. The figure had been used before (Jer. xvi. 16), but then it had presented its darker aspect, and the "fishers of men" were their captors and enslavers.—E. H. PLUMPTRE.

Thou shouldst be a leader into the Kingdom of God, and enkindle thy brother with thy love and meekness, that he may see in thee God's essence as in a mirror, and thus in thee take hold also with his imagination. Doest thou this, then bringest thou thy soul, thy work, likewise thy neighbour or brother into God's Kingdom, and enlargest the Kingdom of heaven with its wonder.—BOEHME.

But mark both their faith and their obedience. For though they were in the midst of their work (and ye know how greedy a thing fishing is), when they heard His command, they delayed not, they procrastinated not, they said not, "Let us return home and converse with our kinsfolk," but *they forsook all, and followed*, even as Elisha did to Elijah.—CHRYSOSTOM.

From toil to a ministry of peace.—QUESNEL.

THE LAWS OF THE KINGDOM

THE SPIRIT OF THE LAWS

And seeing the multitudes, he went up into the mountain: and when he had sat down, his disciples came unto him: and he opened his mouth and taught them.

Matt. V. 1–2.

IN the Sermon on the Mount our Lord gave an outline of that new Kingdom of heaven which He proposed to set up upon the earth, and of which He was Himself to be the Sovereign. He first describes the character of its citizens, in the Beatitudes. He then points out the nature of their influence among mankind at large. They were to preserve society from corruption like the salt; they were to guide it like a city set on a hill, like the light upon a candlestick. He then proceeds to explain that the law of the new kingdom would not destroy the law of the old, but on the contrary would fulfil it —fulfil it in the spirit even where setting it aside in the letter; and then He shows how this principle would apply to six different precepts of the ancient law, which He passes successively in review. After this He describes the new life of the citizens of the kingdom as seen in the unostentatious practice of almsgiving, of prayer, of fasting, but also as apprehended even more intimately in its ruling temper and spirit, in its persistent laying up of the true treasure in heaven, in its single-minded devotion to the service of God, in its comparative indifference to earthly interests, such as those of food and dress.—H. P. LIDDON.

Before Christ came, the heathen had counted for divine the legislative wisdom of the man—manly strength, manly truth, manly justice, manly courage. The life and the cross of Christ shed a splendour from heaven upon a new and till then unheard-of order of heroism—that which may be called the femi-

nine order—meekness, endurance, long-suffering, the passive strength of martyrdom. For Christianity does not say honour to the wise, but "the meek."

F. W. ROBERTSON.

Here the blessedness is that of those who, whatever their outward state may be, are in their inward life as those who feel that they have nothing of their own, must be receivers before they give, must be dependent on another's bounty, and be, as it were, the "bedesmen" of the great King. To that temper of mind belongs the "Kingdom of heaven," the eternal realities, in this life and the life to come, of that society of which Christ is the Head.—E. H. PLUMPTRE.

Sometimes one seems unable to believe, and yet there is faith in his very longing and complaint before God. Such mourners have already pressed forward into the second benediction.—LANGE.

Be humble in asking pardon, and be easy in giving it; and you will be at peace with all.—BERNARD.

It is because of the special connection of meekness with contentment that it is promised that the meek "shall inherit the earth." Only contentment can possess.—RUSKIN.

He who builds his virtues on humility cannot go wrong.—RUYSBROEK.

Holiness and happiness are one.—TRAHERNE.

True humility the cheapest, yet best ornament of the soul. . . . The first thing in religion, the second thing, and the third thing is humility.—AUGUSTINE.

It is not enough to wish to be good, unless we *hunger* after it.—JEROME.

The more God gives, the more He makes us desire; until He leaves us empty that He may fill us with good things.—JOHN OF THE CROSS.

THE NEW WEAPON

Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil: but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

Matt. V. 38–39.

JESUS' meaning is: You have thought that you were acting in a reasonable manner in defending yourself by violence against evil, in tearing out an eye for an eye, by fighting against evil with criminal tribunals, guardians of the peace, armies;- but I say unto you, "Renounce violence; have nothing to do with violence; do harm to no one, not even to your enemy." I understand now that in saying "Resist not evil," Jesus not only told us what would result from the observance of this rule, but established a new basis for society conformable to His doctrine, and opposed to the social basis established by the law of Moses, by Roman law, and by the different codes in force to-day. He formulated a new law whose effect would be to deliver humanity from its self-inflicted woes. His declaration was: "You believe that your laws reform criminals; as a matter of fact they only make more criminals. There is only one way to suppress evil, and that is to return good for evil, without respect of persons. For thousands of years you have tried the other method, now try Mine—try the reverse."—TOLSTOY.

My neighbour, or my servant, or my child, has done me an injury, and it is just that he should suffer in return. Such is the doctrine which Jesus Christ summoned His whole resources of persuasion to oppose. "Love your enemies; bless those that curse you": such, He says, is the practice of God.—SHELLEY.

THE LAW OF EXTRA SERVICE

And whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him twain.

Matt. V. 41.

ONE thing we may hold with approximate certainty, and that is, that all the *highest* doctrines, the purest moral precepts, the most profound spiritual revelations, recorded in the Gospels, were actually those of Christ Himself. The Originator of the Christian movement must have been the greatest soul of His time, as of all time. If He did not speak those words of wisdom, who could have recorded them for Him? It would have taken a Jesus to forge a Jesus.—COBBE.

Every now and then Christ quits the beaten track to pioneer the unexpressed, and throws out a pregnant and magnanimous hyperbole; for it is only by some bold poetry of thought that men can be strung up above a level of everyday conceptions to take a broader look upon experience or accept some higher principle of conduct. To a man who is of the same mind that was in Christ, who stands at some centre not too far from His, and looks at the world and conduct from some not dissimilar, or, at least, not opposing attitude —or shortly to a man who is of Christ's philosophy —every such saying should come with a thrill of joy and corroboration; he should feel each one below his feet as another sure foundation in the flux of time and chance; each should be another proof that in the torrent of the years and generations, where doctrines and great armaments and empires are swept away and swallowed, he stands immovable, holding by the eternal stars.—R. L. STEVENSON.

Not the lash of Law, but the constraint of Love.

THE LAW OF LOVING

Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you.
Matt. V. 43–44.

LOVE as God loves, regardless of merit and of the reciprocity of love; loving because you would be like God, loving because God has first loved you.

C. J. VAUGHAN.

This precept alone is a sufficient proof of the holiness of the gospel, and of the truth of the Christian religion. None but God could have imposed a yoke so contrary to self-love; and nothing but the supreme and infinite love could have made men practise a law so insupportable to corrupt nature.—QUESNEL.

Cleomenes, being asked what a good king should do, replied, Good turns to his friends, and evil to his enemies.—M. HENRY.

Seest thou how many steps He hath ascended, and how He hath set us on the very summit of virtue? Nay, mark it, numbering it from the beginning. A first step is, not to begin with injustice; a second, after he hath begun, to vindicate one's self by equal retaliation; a third, not to do unto him that is vexing us the same that one hath suffered, but to be quiet; a fourth, even to give one's self up to suffer wrongfully; a fifth, to give up yet more than the other, who did the wrong, wishes; a sixth, not to hate him who hath done so; a seventh, even to love him; an eighth, to do him good also; a ninth, to entreat God Himself on his behalf. Seest thou what height of self-command? Wherefore glorious, too, as we see, is the reward which it hath.—CHRYSOSTOM.

THE LAW OF GIVING

But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee.

Matt. VI. 3–4.

HERE again His enigmatical meaning is not of the hands, but He hath put the thing hyperbolically. As thus: "If it can be," saith He, "for thyself not to know it, let this be the object of thy endeavour; that, if it were possible, it may be concealed from the very hands that minister."—CHRYSOSTOM.

The giving of alms is a great duty, and a duty which all the disciples of Christ, according to their ability, must abound in. It is prescribed by the law of nature and of Moses, and great stress is laid upon it by the prophets. For alms are righteousness. The Jews called the poor's box, the box of righteousness. That which is given to the poor is said to be their due. The duty is not the less necessary and excellent for its being abused by hypocrites to serve their pride. It is true our alms-deeds do not deserve heaven; but it is as true that we cannot go to heaven without them. It is "pure religion," and will be the test at the great day. Christ here takes it for granted that His disciples give alms, nor will He own those that do not.

M. HENRY.

The history of the word "alms" is singularly interesting. In the original meaning of the Greek it was the quality of mercy, or rather of "mercifulness," as something more complete. The practice of the Hellenistic Jews limited the word (*eleemosyna*) to money-gifts. It passed with this meaning untranslated into the language of Latin Christendom, and

from that again into European languages, in various forms, " aumone," " almose," and at last the word of six syllables and rich fullness of meaning contracts and collapses into our modern English " alms."

E. H. PLUMPTRE.

I was walking along the street. . . . I was stopped by a decrepit old beggar.

Bloodshot, tearful eyes, blue lips, coarse rags, festering wounds. . . . Oh, how hideously poverty had eaten into this miserable creature!

He held out to me a red, swollen, filthy hand. He groaned. He mumbled of help.

I began feeling in all my pockets. . . . No purse, no watch, not even a handkerchief. . . . I had taken nothing with me. And the beggar was still waiting . . . and his outstretched hand feebly shook and trembled.

Confused, abashed, I warmly grasped the filthy, shaking hand. . . . " Don't be angry, brother; I have nothing, brother."

The beggar stared at me with his bloodshot eyes; his blue lips smiled; and he in his turn gripped my chilly fingers.

" What of it, brother? " he mumbled; " thanks for this, too. That is a gift, too, brother."

I knew that I too had received a gift from my brother.—TURGENEV.

'Twould give me joy some gracious deed to meet,
That has not called for glory in the street.

CRABBE.

Unto my soul I said, " Make now complete
Thy sacrifice by silence. Undeterr'd
Strike down this beggar heart, that would be heard,
And stops men's pity in the public street."

OWEN MEREDITH.

THE LAW OF ASKING

And in praying use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

Matt. VI. 7–8.

WHO, it may be said, ever received all the blessings he prayed for? But this is answered by asking again, Who ever, when he prayed, believed that he received what he asked for in the full meaning of our Saviour's words? For by such belief it should seem that he meant full trust in Him, and entire submission to His will. Any person thoroughly willing to let God choose for him, would in reality always believe that he receives of God what he prays for. For he would be more sure of God's love and disposition to do the very best for him, than of his own love for himself. Therefore, how earnestly soever he may feel and utter any particular wish, it will always be tempered with this conviction that, however God may appear to deny him, yet the blessing he asks for will come somehow, in a way which God knows to be better.—J. KEBLE.

We bring our wants and desires to God (1) that we may see them as He sees them, judge how far they are selfish or capricious, how far they are in harmony with His will; (2) that we may, in the thought of that Presence and its infinite holiness, feel that all other prayers—those which are but the expression of wishes for earthly good, or deliverance from earthly evil—are of infinitely little moment as compared with deliverance from the penalty and the power of the sin which we have made our own; (3) that, conscious of our

weakness, we may gain strength for the work and the conflict of life in communion with the Eternal, who is in very deed a " Power that makes for righteousness." These are, if we may so speak, the lines upon which the Lord's Prayer has been constructed, and all other prayers are excellent in proportion as they approach that pattern.—E. H. PLUMPTRE.

Longing desire prayeth always, though the tongue be silent. If thou art ever longing, thou art ever praying. When stayeth prayer? When desire groweth cold.—AUGUSTINE.

He who says " Our Father," sums up in this word, forgiveness of sins, justification, sanctification, redemption, adoption, inheritance, brotherly fellowship with the only-begotten Son, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost in all their fullness.—CHRYSOSTOM.

Observe by what manner of prayer or meditation or exercise of devotion thou findest greatest and purest desire stirred up in thee to Him, and most feeling of Him; by that kind of prayer, exercise, or work seekest thou Him best, and shalt best find Him.—HYLTON.

Vocal prayer is of immense utility; it awakens interior devotion, and sustains it when it is awakened. We ought to honour God with all His gifts, and voice is His gift as well as mind.—AQUINAS.

" The Will of God," which we pray " may be done," is that which Christ both did and taught; meekness in our conversation, firmness in our faith, modesty in our speech, uprightness in our actions, strictness in our deportment.—CYPRIAN.

If thou prayest for thyself alone, thou alone prayest for thyself.—AMBROSE.

The subject-matter of this prayer forms the foundation of the whole First Epistle of Peter.—BENGEL.

THE LAW OF SELF-DISCIPLINE

Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance.

Matt. VI. 16.

ALMSGIVING, prayer, and fasting are the three especial Christian sacrifices: the first of our estates; the second of our souls; the third from our bodies.—AQUINAS.

Fasting, prayer, and almsgiving, that is, denial of self, love of others, and devotion to God, are the three heads under which our Lord brings all Christian duties.

E. B. PUSEY.

Our Lord, we may note, does not blame the principle, or even the rule, on which the Pharisees acted. He recognises fasting, as He recognises almsgiving and prayer, and is content to warn His disciples against the ostentation that vitiates all three, the secret self-satisfaction under the mask of contrition, the "pride that apes humility." The very words "when thou fastest" contain an implied command.—E. H. PLUMPTRE.

Crosses are proclaimed as common accidents to all the saints, and in them standeth a part of our communion with Christ. How sweet a thing were it for us to learn to make our burdens light by framing our hearts to the burden.—S. RUTHERFORD.

Our whole life should be nothing else but a Lent; to prepare ourselves against the Sabbath of our death and the Easter of our Resurrection.—BERNARD.

Before me and before thy brothers always show a face shining with holy joy. It is not fitting when one is in God's service to have a gloomy face or a chilling look.—FRANCIS OF ASSISI.

A cheerful spirit is the best convoy for religion.

JEREMY TAYLOR.

LIFE WITHIN THE KINGDOM

THE PERIL OF EARTHLY-MINDEDNESS

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust doth consume, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also.

Matt. VI. 19–21.

WHATEVER man loves, that is his god. For he carries it in his heart; he goes about with it night and day; he sleeps and wakes with it, be it what it may—wealth or pelf, pleasure or renown.

LUTHER.

Christ desires His people to lay up store in heaven, that they may have a heart in heaven; this is why He bids them to lift up their goods, that they may lift up their souls as well. For it is the power which the "*treasure*" has inevitably to draw after it the heart, the fact that it is the loadstar to which the needle *must* point, which makes it of such consequence *where* this treasure is stored.—TRENCH.

No one ever went to heaven, whose heart was not there before.—SOUTH.

Allusion is here made to the three sorts of treasures which human foresight was wont to store up: garments, corn, and fruits of the earth, and gold, silver, and jewels; all of which are perishable and liable to be destroyed by the moth and caterpillar, or else by rust.

J. HAMMOND.

Where your pleasure is, there is your *treasure*; where your treasure, there your heart; where your heart, there your happiness.—AUGUSTINE.

What folly to leave your treasures in the place from whence you are going away, instead of sending them before you whither ye are going.—CHRYSOSTOM.

THE PERIL OF INSINCERITY

The lamp of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness.
Matt. VI. 22-23.

SINGLENESS of intention will preserve us from the snare of having a double treasure, and therefore a divided heart. If the spiritual faculty, whose proper work it is to give light, be itself diseased—if it discerns not singly but doubly, and therefore dimly—then the whole life also is shrouded in gloom. If that is the case with the higher life, what will be the state of the lower! If the light is darkened, what will be the state of the region of life which is in itself naturally dark—the region of appetites and passions, which needs the presence of the light to keep them at all in check!—E. H. PLUMPTRE.

The single eye is the pure intention. The eye is neither single nor pure when it looks upon two differing objects at once; nor the heart when it pretends to unite God and the world, to be the servant of Christ and to please men, and to reconcile the gospel with the stronger desire of earthly things. Nothing is more single than the eye of faith; there is nothing which renders our whole conduct more uniform in goodness, than to follow singly the light of it.—QUESNEL.

Those who have bad sight see many lamps instead of one.—JEROME.

Were thine eye not sunny, how couldst thou ever see the sun?—GOETHE.

A single eye is that which looks upon one object, upon God, and God only, and God principally; and on all other things in Him, and with reference to Him.
E. LEIGH.

THE PERIL OF THE DIVIDED HEART

Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

Matt. VI. 24.

"MAMMON" is a Syriac word that signifies gain; so that whatever in this world is, or is accounted by us to be *gain*, is "mammon." Whatever is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is "mammon." In a word, self, the unity in which the world's trinity centres, sensual, secular self is the "mammon" which cannot be served in conjunction with God; for if it be served, it is in competition with Him and in contradiction to Him.

M. HENRY.

Either heaven or earth—either God or the world—one, not both, will be the place of your treasure; one, not both, will be the Lord of your service.

J. VAUGHAN.

A man must first have two hearts and two souls and two selves, before he can give a heart to God and a heart to the world too.—SOUTH.

Obey the word of Christ in its simplicity, in wholeness of purpose, and serenity of sacrifice . . . and truly you shall receive sevenfold into your bosom in this present life and in the world to come life everlasting. All your knowledge will become to you clear and sure, all your footsteps safe, in the present brightness of domestic life you will foretaste the joy of Paradise, and to your children's children bequeath not only noble fame but endless virtue.—RUSKIN.

The double eye is that which though it looks to God, and doth many things in obedience to Him, yet it looks to somewhat else, and takes other things as greater encouragements.—E. LEIGH.

THE ONLY SAFEGUARD

But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Matt. VI. 33.

THE context shows that the words point to the "seeking" of prayer, rather than of act, though the latter meaning is, of course, not excluded. What is thus to be sought is "the kingdom of God," the higher spiritual life in its completeness, for ourselves and for others; and with it we are to seek "His righteousness," that which must be His gift to us, and therefore to be sought in prayer. One who seeks for this may well be content to leave all else in his Father's hands. Among the few traditional sayings ascribed to our Lord is one to the same effect quoted by Origen, "Ask great things, and little things shall be added to you: ask heavenly things, and earthly things shall be added to you."

E. H. PLUMPTRE.

Seek ye—the kingdom, now at hand; and not difficult to find. *First*—he who makes that his *first* object, finds it his *only* object.—BENGEL.

Christ does not here tell us merely to seek *righteousness*, though elsewhere we are thus bidden; but to seek *God's righteousness*. Any righteousness which is of our own making, which we try to gain by standing aloof from Him, is worth nothing at all.—F. J. A. HART.

We forget that there may be many duties, but that among them all there is a first and a last, and that we must not fulfil the last before fulfilling the first, just as one must not harrow without ploughing.—TOLSTOY.

Every man is worth just as much as the things are worth about which he is concerned.

MARCUS AURELIUS.

CHARACTER FOR CHARACTER

Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgement ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?
Matt. VII. 1-3.

AS ye have not been *judged* but *forgiven*, so deal with others after God's forgiving love.—STIER.

Do not constitute yourselves judges of others' faults.
MEYER.

The way to righteousness lies in finding not others' sins but our own.—OLSHAUSEN.

When the beam is removed the sight is clear. He is no perverse judge who first corrects himself and then his brother.—BENGEL.

The question, how far we can obey the precept, is not without its difficulties. Must we not, even as a matter of duty, be judging others every day of our lives? The juryman giving his verdict, the master who discharges a dishonest servant, the bishop who puts in force the discipline of the Church—are these acting against our Lord's commands? And if not, where are we to draw the line? The answer to these questions is not found in the distinctions of a formal casuistry. We have rather to remember that our Lord here, as elsewhere, gives principles rather than rules, and embodies the principle in a rule which, because it cannot be kept in the letter, forces us back upon the spirit. What is forbidden is the censorious judging temper, eager to find faults and condemn men for them, suspicious of motives, detecting, let us say, for example, in controversy, and denouncing, the faintest shade of heresy.—E. H. PLUMPTRE.

THE GOLDEN RULE

All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them.

Matt. VII. 12.

TAKE it negatively, or positively, it comes all to the same. We must not do to others the evil they have done to us, nor the evil which they would do to us if it were in their power; nor may we do that which we think, if it were done to us, we could bear contentedly, but what we desire should be done to us. The meaning of this rule lies in three things. (i) We must do that to our neighbour which we ourselves acknowledge to be fit and reasonable; the appeal is made to our own judgment, and the discovery of our judgment is referred to that which is our own will and expectation, when it is our own case. (ii) We must put other people upon the level with ourselves, and reckon we are as much obliged to them as they to us. We are as much bound to the duty of justice as they, and they as much entitled to the benefit of it as we. (iii) We must, in our dealings with men, suppose ourselves in the same particular case and circumstances with those we have to do with and deal accordingly.—M. HENRY.

The peculiarly Christian element in this injunction is the novelty of the measure which we are to apply to our love to our neighbour. What we ask from our neighbours is, that they should be ministers of good, not of evil, angels, not devils to us: hence our duty to them corresponds with this our demand.—SCHAFF.

What we would have other men think, speak, and do to us, that must we think, speak, and do unto them, and no worse. This is not to be understood of evil wishes, but of a desire well ordered.—E. LEIGH.

THE TEST OF FRUITFULNESS

Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them.
Matt. VII. 20.

CHRIST says, By their fruits ye shall know them; not by the rind of an outward profession, not by the foliage of fair words; but by their fruits alone is judgment passed upon these trees: and not our judgment only, but that of the Supreme Judge of all at the last Tribunal. In the sight of God and men, words are silent, while deeds speak, yea, cry aloud.—Bp. Hall.

It is justly asked, What fruits Christ would have us look to? For many esteem among fruits some things which pertain to the sheep's clothing, and in this manner are deceived concerning wolves. For they practise fasting, almsgiving, or praying, which they display before men, seeking to please those to whom these things seem difficult. These then are not the fruits by which He teacheth us to discern them. And which are they by which we may know a good tree? The same Apostle teaches, saying, "The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace."—Augustine.

A man's nature runs either to herbs or weeds. Therefore, let him seasonably water the one and destroy the other.—Bacon.

The tree is known by its fruits; most truly so—but it depends for the maintenance of those fruits, yea, even for its own existence, upon its root in the soil beneath. The Christian life is judged of (and this with the strictest propriety) by that part of it which is seen, but it depends upon the part of it which is unseen for the hold it takes and keeps upon God.

Dora Greenwell.

THE MANIFESTING OF THE KINGDOM

THE KINGLY PHYSICIAN

And when he was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth in the house sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And he saith unto him, I will come and heal him.
Matt. VIII. 5–7.

IN his true and ever-deepening humility he counted it a presumption to have asked, though by the intervention of others, the presence under his roof of so exalted a personage. It was not merely that he was a heathen, and so might claim no near approach to the King of Israel; but there was, no doubt, beneath this and mingling with this, a deep and inward feeling of his own personal unworthiness and unfitness for a close communion with a holy being, which caused him again to send, beseeching the Lord to approach no nearer, but only to speak the word, and he knew that straightway his servant would be healed. And thus, in Augustine's words, "counting himself unworthy that Christ should enter into his doors, he was counted worthy that Christ should enter into his heart." And this was a far better boon; for Christ sat down in the houses of men, as of that proud self-righteous Pharisee (Luke vii. 36), whose hearts were not for this the less empty of His presence. But this centurion received Him in his heart, whom he did not receive in his house. And, indeed, every little trait of his character, as it comes out in the sacred narrative, points him out as one in whom the seed of God's word would find the ready and prepared soil of a good and honest heart. For not to speak of those prime conditions, faith and humility, which in so eminent a degree shone forth in him—the affection which he had evidently won from those Jewish elders,

the zeal which had stirred him to build a house for the worship of the true God, his earnest care and anxiety about a slave—one so generally excluded from all earnest human sympathies on the part of his master, that even a Cicero thinks it needful to excuse himself for feeling deeply the death of such a one in his household—all these traits of character combine to present him to us as one of those " children of God " scattered abroad in the world, whom the Son of God came that He might gather together into the one fellowship of His Church (John xi. 52).—TRENCH.

The centurion's humility was not more low than his faith was lofty ; that reaches up into heaven ; and, in the face of human weakness, descries Omnipotence : " Only say the word, and my servant shall be whole."

BP. HALL.

The great Physician brought one remedy alike to body and soul.—BENGEL.

Medicine receives great honour from the works of our Saviour, who was physician both of soul and body, and made the latter the perpetual subject of His miracles, as the soul was the constant subject of His doctrine.

BACON.

I would say, moreover, that agreeably to the promise of Jesus, His disciples performed even greater works than these miracles of Jesus which were perceptible only to the senses. For the eyes of those who are blind are ever opened ; and the ears of those who are deaf to virtuous words listen readily to the doctrine of God, and of the blessed life with Him ; and many who were lame in the feet of the " inner man " as the Scripture calls it, having now been healed by the word, do not simply leap, but leap as the hart.

ORIGEN.

GOD MANIFEST IN MAN

And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the heaven have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.
Matt. VIII. 20.

THE passage is remarkable as the first in this Gospel in which the name occurs which was afterwards so prominent in our Lord's teaching, and this is accordingly the right place for tracing the history and significance of that title.

As found in the Old Testament, the term is the literal translation of the Hebrew *ben-adam*, the latter word expressing the generic weakness and frailty of man's nature, as the Hebrew *ish* expresses its greatness and its strength. It stands therefore as representing man idealised under that one aspect of his being. "What is man that Thou art mindful of him? and the *son of man*, that Thou visitest him?" (Ps. viii. 4), "Put not your trust in princes, nor in *the son of man*, in whom is no help" (Ps. cxlvi. 3), are instances of its use in this meaning. In some passages our version expresses the same thought by rendering the "*sons of Adam*" and the "*sons of Ish*" as "low and high" (Ps. xlix. 2), or the former word alone as "men of low degree" (Ps. lxii. 9).

The title received a new prominence about the time of the Captivity from its use in Ezekiel's prophecies. There it appears frequently (not fewer than eighty-seven times in all) as the title with which the prophet is addressed by the voice of Jehovah. We can scarcely doubt that it was used there in all the fullness of its earlier meaning, and was designed to teach the prophet that, amid all the greatness of his work, he was still subject to all the weakness and

temptations of man's nature, and ought therefore to have compassion on their infirmities. Yet a fresh aspect of the name was presented in the mysterious vision of Dan. vii. 13, in which " One like the *Son of man* came with the clouds of heaven, and was brought to the Ancient of Days, . . . and there was given unto Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom." The word used is not, it is true, *ben-adam*, but *bar-enosh*, but there is no traceable distinction of meaning between the two. Here, then, the thought manifestly was this, that One who shared man's weakness, should also be a sharer of God's glory, and be the Head of the divine kingdom.

So when the crowd at Jerusalem are questioning in their hearts whether Jesus was the Christ, they are not startled at this application of the name, and their question, " Who is this Son of man ? " is the utterance of their wonder that things so unlike what they expected of the Christ should be predicted of One who claimed the title (John xii. 34). It was accordingly, with these ideas attached to it—involving at once fellowship with the lowest of the heirs of our humanity, and yet also participation in the eternal glory of the Highest—that our Lord claimed the title, and used it with such marvellous frequency.—E. H. PLUMPTRE.

It is the name by which the Lord ordinarily designates himself as the Messiah—the Son of God *manifested in the flesh of Adam—the second Adam*. And to it belong all those conditions of humiliation, suffering, and exaltation, which it behooved the Son of man to go through.—ALFORD.

I saw myself a youth, almost a boy, in a low-pitched wooden church. The slim wax candles gleamed, spots of red, before the old pictures of the Saints.

There stood before me many people, all fair-haired peasant heads. From time to time they began swaying, falling, rising again, like the ripe ears of wheat when the wind in summer passes over them. All at once a man came up from behind and stood beside me. I did not turn towards him, but I felt that the man was Christ. Emotion, curiosity, awe, overmastered me. I made an effort and looked at my neighbour. A face like everyone's, a face like all men's faces. The eyes looked a little upwards, quietly and intently; the lips closed, not compressed; the upper lip as it were resting on the other; a small beard parted in two; the hands folded and still; and the clothes on him like everyone's. "What sort of a Christ is this?" I thought. "Such an ordinary, ordinary man. It cannot be." I turned away, but I had hardly turned my eyes from this ordinary man when I felt that it was really none other than Christ standing beside me. Suddenly my heart sank and I came to myself. Only then I realised that just such a face is the face of Christ—a face like all men's faces.—TURGENEV.

We never think of Christ enough as God, never enough as Man: the instinctive habit of our minds being always to miss of the divinity, and the reasoning and enforced habit to miss of the humanity.—RUSKIN.

Jesus means nothing else by this title than "the Messiah."—MEYER.

He calls Himself "Son of Man" because He had appeared as a man; because He belonged to mankind; because He had done such great things for human nature; because He was Himself the realised ideal of humanity.—NEANDER.

Christ by this phrase represented Himself as the head, the type, the ideal of the race.—STANTON.

THE RULER OF NATURE

What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?

Matt. VIII. 27.

THE presence of Christ does not exempt His disciples and followers from trouble and danger. Here is a great tempest about the disciples' ears, though Christ was in their company. They were alarmed. Here was faith mixed with human frailty. He rebukes their fears and their lack of faith, but after He has rebuked the winds and the seas.—W. BURKITT.

Christ's miracles are in unison with His whole character, and bear a proportion to it, like that which we observe in the most harmonious productions of nature; and in this way they receive from it great confirmation. And the same presumption in their favour rises from His religion. That a religion carrying in itself such marks of divinity and so inexplicable on human principles should receive outward confirmations from Omnipotence, is not surprising. The extraordinary character of the religion accords with and seems to demand extraordinary interpositions in its behalf. Its miracles are not solitary, naked, unexplained, disconnected events, but are bound up with a system, which is worthy of God, and impressed with God; which occupies a large space, and is operating with great and increasing energy, in human affairs.

CHANNING.

First He calmed the disciples' minds, and then He calmed the sea.—BENGEL.

Insensible creatures hear the Creator's voice and obey; man alone is deaf and disobedient thereto.

QUESNEL.

IN THE LAZAR-HOUSE OF HUMANITY

And it came to pass, as he sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Jesus and his disciples.
Matt. IX. 10.

A PHYSICIAN cannot afford to be fastidious. Even so would men have thought of Christ's behaviour, had it occurred to them to regard Him as a spiritual physician, and the religion He came to establish as before all things redemptive. A spiritual physician must visit those who are spiritually diseased, and a religion of redemption cannot consistently be exclusive and dainty.—A. B. BRUCE.

What bound in one these souls so different? It was their love for the Son of Man. It was their love for the earthly Christ—the brother-Christ, the Christ of the street and of the lane. The publicans and sinners were not yet dreaming of salvation. They were seeking no supernatural help. It was the *natural* in Christ which they loved—the voice, the gait, the manner, the countenance. They loved Him for less than He was worth. The private friends of a poet may be unable to appreciate any poetry; yet the man may be very dear to them, and he will accept their outside fondness. So did Jesus accept a love for that which was His least possession. It was a love for something inferior, but it was not an inferior love.—G. MATHESON.

Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne, and I myself, have founded great empires; but upon what do these creations of our genius depend? Upon force. Jesus, alone, founded His empire upon love, and to this very day millions would die for Him. None else is like Him!
NAPOLEON.

THE JOY OF THE KINGDOM

Then come to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said unto them, Can the sons of the bride-chamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then will they fast.
Matt. IX. 14-15.

IT is not as Jews that they advocate this fasting, but as Pharisees, or as disciples of John the Baptist—that is, as a company of men professing unusual strictness of life; and they express their surprise that the disciples of Jesus do not, in the character of His disciples, practise some similar system of fasting, and thus rise superior to the general laxity of the multitude. Jesus implies that so they will, but not at present.—F. H. DUNWELL.

The meaning is, I will not disturb the joy my disciples have by reason of my presence.—DIODATI.

Every soul has its time of joy and consolation, and its time of exercise and trial: the one ought to be a preparation for the other.—QUESNEL.

This is the first intimation of His death and departure, after which fasting will be appropriate and voluntary. Its value consists in it being spontaneously adopted, not forcibly imposed.—A. PLUMMER.

Custom is generally much too strong for the most resolute resolver, though furnished for the assault with all the weapons of philosophy.—DR. JOHNSON.

No wonder that the disciples of Jesus were a puzzle and a scandal to the disciples of the Baptist; for it is not easy to understand or sympathise with conduct springing out of a radically different spirit to that which animates oneself.—A. B. BRUCE.

THE OLD AND THE NEW

And no man putteth a piece of undressed cloth upon an old garment; for that which should fill it up taketh from the garment, and a worse rent is made. Neither do men put new wine into old wine-skins: else the skins burst, and the wine is spilled, and the skins perish: but they put new wine into fresh wine-skins, and both are preserved.
Matt. IX. 16-17.

HIS disciples were as an old garment. Their faith and endurance as yet are but slight. Too great a trial must not be put upon them; for this might cause them to despair, and perhaps to depart from Him altogether. By the descent of the Holy Spirit upon them they shall be renovated; made new and strong like a new garment. The same truth He shows in another way. His disciples are as old skins, unable to bear any great strain. Any great amount of affliction, either in the shape of persecution or self-discipline, would at present do them more harm than good. After the descent of the Holy Spirit His disciples will be able to bear any strain upon them, however great.—F. H. DUNWELL.

The bottles are those made of hides partly tanned, and retaining, to a great extent, the form of the living animals. These, as they grew dry with age, became very liable to crack, and were unable to resist the pressure of the fermenting liquor. If the mistake were made, the bottles were marred, and the wine spilt. When we interpret the parable, we see at once that the " new wine " represents the inner, as the garment did the outer, aspect of Christian life, the new energies and gifts of the Spirit, which, as on the day of Pentecost, were likened to new wine (Acts ii. 13).

E. H. PLUMPTRE.

THE HEM OF THE GARMENT

And behold, a woman, who had an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: for she said within herself, If I do but touch his garment, I shall be made whole.

Matt. IX. 20–21.

THE simplest and obvious use of sorrow is to remind us of God. Jairus and the woman, like many others, came to Christ from a sense of want. It would seem that a certain shock is needed to bring us in contact with reality. We are not conscious of our breathing till obstruction makes it felt. We are not aware of the possession of a heart till some disease, some sudden joy or sorrow, rouses it into extraordinary action. And we are not conscious of the mighty cravings of our half-divine humanity; we are not aware of the God within us, till some chasm yawns which must be filled, or till the rending asunder of our affections forces us to become fearfully conscious of a need.—F. W. ROBERTSON.

She touched Christ; first, in mind; afterwards in body.—THEOPHYLACT.

The power of the Spirit of Christ went out of Him, like the hem spreading itself beyond the garment.

HILARY.

How can the arts overcome the slow dying of men's hearts that we call the progress of the world, and lay their hands upon men's heart-strings again, without becoming the garment of religion as in old times?

YEATS.

If Shakespeare was to come into the room, we should all rise up to meet him; but if that Person was to come into it, we should all fall down and try to kiss the hem of His garment.—C. LAMB.

THE TOUCH OF THE HAND

But when the crowd was put forth, he entered in, and took her by the hand; and the damsel arose.

Matt. IX. 25.

HOW could that touch, that call, be other than effectual? He who made that hand, touched it; and He who shall once say, "Arise, ye dead," said now, "Maid, arise." Death cannot but obey Him who is the Lord of life. The soul is ever equally in His hand who is the God of spirits; it cannot but go and come at His command.—Bp. Hall.

And now, having thus spoken, He expelled from the house the crowd of turbulent mourners, and this for two reasons. Their presence, in the first place, was evidently inappropriate and superfluous there; they were mourners for the dead, and she was not dead; or, at all events, death in her was so soon to give place to returning life, that it did not deserve the name; it was but as a sleep and an awakening. This would have been reason enough for silencing and putting out those mourners. But in addition to this, the boisterous and turbulent grief of some, the hired lamentations, it may be, gave no promise of the true tone and temper, which became the witnesses of so holy and awful a mystery.—Trench.

Sleep is death's younger brother, and so like him, that I never dare trust him without my prayer.

Sir T. Browne.

The people are put forth, that the damsel may be raised; for unless the multitude of worldly cares is first banished from the secrets of the heart, the soul that is laid dead within cannot rise again.

Gregory the Great.

THE SERVICE OF THE KINGDOM

THE MISSION OF DISCIPLES

And he called unto him his twelve disciples, and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of disease and all manner of sickness.

Matt. X. 1.

THE persons whom our Lord chose for His partners and companions in establishing the Gospel were of the lowest class, as well in station as in abilities. Such persons were in many respects most difficult to be dealt with, but no unfit instruments for the purpose for which they were then designed; namely, to testify what they had so often seen and heard; and on all accounts most proper to afford the best and most unexceptionable evidence to futurity. They were persons who could by no means be supposed able either to conceive a scheme so great as that of reforming a world, of altering all its customs and opinions; or to entertain the least hope of accomplishing it whenever suggested to them: persons who wanted both courage and conduct to attempt this vast and truly original design, with any prospect of success: persons, too, who were to be suffered often to doubt and dispute with our Lord; to distrust, desert, and even deny Him; in order to convince after-ages that they were such as could not, with the least show of reason, be suspected of having at first concerted all this of themselves, or carried it on afterwards among themselves, or effected what they did of it by any methods merely human. With such as these did Christ hold conversation during the whole course of His ministry; to strengthen and increase their faith; to open their eyes and enlarge their understanding, that at length they might even judge what was right.—LAW.

THE EQUIPMENT OF DISCIPLES

Get you no gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses; no wallet for your journey, neither two coats, nor shoes, nor staff: for the labourer is worthy of his food.

Matt. X. 9–10.

THEY were to have none of the reserved comforts of common travellers, no second staff in case the first should break, no second pair of shoes in which to rest the worn and weary feet. The "sandals" were the shoes of the peasant class. Experience (and, we may add, the Spirit that teaches by experience) has led the Christian Church at large to look on these commands as binding only during the mission on which the Twelve were actually sent. It is impossible not to admire the noble enthusiasm of poverty which showed itself in the literal adoption of such rules by the followers of Francis of Assisi, and, to some extent, by those of Wiclif; but the history of the Mendicant Orders, and other like fraternities, forms part of that teaching of history which has led men to feel that in the long-run the beggar's life will bring the beggar's vices. Yet here, as in the case of the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount, the spirit is binding still, though the letter has passed away. The mission work of the Church has ever prospered in proportion as that spirit has pervaded it.—E. H. PLUMPTRE.

Only give thyself utterly to Christ—this is the greatest and the most important thing. Place all at His disposal. If thou possess Him, He will surely teach thee what thou shouldest do and what thou shouldest give up. He will teach thee to speak for Him; He will give thee courage and wisdom as to how thou shouldest behave. Be not anxious as to thy dealings with others; commit all to Him.—BOEHME.

THE TRIALS OF DISCIPLES

Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves. Matt. X. 16.

LET everyone learn to beware of himself, *for man is a wolf to man.* And so no one need say, I have been born in an inauspicious time, I cannot be a martyr. There is no Nero now, no Decius now. Anyone can be a martyr if he manfully resists lusts, fears, temptations, for the love of God. Thy cupidity is a Decius to thee, thy fear a Nero, thy temptation is a Julian. Thy companion persecutes thee—laughs at thee—calumniates thee. Fever, cold, asthma, torment thee. If thou bear these patiently for the love of God, thou art a martyr of patience, like Job. Gluttony goads thee to swill in wine and delicacies. Resist, and thou art a martyr of abstinence like Daniel. Ambition attracts thee to raise thyself above others, to aim at high dignities. Pluck it from thy mind, and thou art a martyr of humility and modesty, like St. Francis. Does lust titillate thee? Mortify it by fasting, and thou wilt be a martyr of chastity, as Joseph was. Study, teach, preach, labour, go to the heathen, that thou mayest save perishing souls, and thou art a martyr of charity, like Xavier.—CORN. À LAPIDE.

All our graces are for the conflict. Perseverance is the only triumphing grace.—BERNARD.

That man cannot be said by his fleeing to deny Christ who only flees lest he should deny Him.

CHRYSOSTOM.

Christ conceals not from His disciples what they have to undergo in His service, because He will not deceive anyone; and because it belongs to Him to fortify the heart of man.—QUESNEL.

THE REWARDS OF DISCIPLES

Fear not therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows. Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven. . . . He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

Matt. X. 31-32, 39.

WHY, if in the season of the conflicts they that confess are so glorious, imagine what they will be in the season of the crowns. If the enemies here applaud, how shall that tenderest of all fathers fail to admire and proclaim thee? Yea, then shall we have both our gifts for the good, and our punishments for the evil. So that such as deny shall suffer harm, both here and there; but the other sort will profit both here and there, both here, making a gain of their death, and in this way becoming more glorious than the living, and there, enjoying those unspeakable blessings. God is in no wise prompt to punish only, but also to confer benefits; and for this last more than for the first.—CHRYSOSTOM.

Our Lord teaches us, as to those very little things, in order that we may know and feel that nothing is too little to be ordered by our Father, nothing too little in which to see His hand, nothing, which touches our souls, too little to accept from Him, nothing too little to be done to Him. Since the hairs of our heads are all numbered, so is every throb or shoot of pain, every beating of the heart. Every tear which starts is seen, and if wept to Him is gathered up by Him. Every heart's sigh He hears at once from every bosom in His whole creation. He, who is in the highest heaven and filleth all things, but is contained in none, is present to each single heart.—KEBLE.

THE KING'S SELF-ESTIMATE

THE WITNESS OF THE WORKS

Now when John heard in the prison the works of the Christ, he sent by his disciples, and said unto him, Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Go your way and tell John the things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them.

Matt. XI. 2-5.

THERE are no adequate grounds for assuming, as some have done, that the Baptist sent the disciples only to remove their doubts. The question comes from him; the answer is sent to him. The meaning of the question is not far to seek. The sickness of deferred hope turns the full assurance of faith into something like despair. The very wonders of which he heard made the feeling more grievous. And so he sends his disciples with the question, which is one of impatience rather than doubt, "Art Thou the coming One of whom the prophets spoke?" (Ps. xl. 7, cxviii. 26; Mal. iii. 1), but if so, why tarry the wheels of Thy chariot? Are we still to look for another and a different Christ?—E. H. PLUMPTRE.

Was it for an impostor or enthusiast to refer messengers who came to him, to miraculous works performed before their eyes, to things done on the spot, to the testimony of their own senses? Would, or could any other than a Prophet, who really came from God, do this? In all this, we discern conviction and sincerity, fairness, truth, and evidence.—PALEY.

Christ would have men judge of Him and others by works. When asked concerning His mission, He makes the proof of it appear in what He has done.

QUESNEL.

THE ROYAL INVITATION

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Matt. XI. 28–30.

"MY yoke is easy, and My burden is light." Let not the word *yoke* terrify us; we feel the weight of it, but we do not bear it alone. Jesus Christ will enable us to bear it, He will teach us the charm of justice and truth, the chaste delights of virtue; His religion supports man against himself, against his corrupt desires, and makes him strong in spite of his weakness. O ye of little faith, what do ye fear? You suffer, but you may suffer with peace, with love for God. You must fight, but you shall gain the victory; God is on your side, and He will crown you with His own hands. You weep, but He Himself shall wipe away your tears. Is it to be lamented that we are delivered from the heavy yoke of the world and have only to bear the light burden that Jesus Christ imposes? Do ye fear being too free from self, from the caprices of our pride, the violence of our passions, and the tyranny of the world?—FÉNELON.

The words are wide enough to cover every form of human sin and sorrow, but the thought that was most prominent in them at the time was that of the burdens grievous to be borne, the yoke of traditions and ordinances which the Pharisees and scribes had imposed on the consciences of men. The first of the two words gives prominence to the active, the latter to the passive, aspect of human suffering, by whatever cause produced.

E. H. PLUMPTRE.

The world says, " Come unto me, and I will fail you " ; the flesh says, " Come unto me, and I will destroy you " ; Christ says, " Come unto Me, and I will give you rest."—BERNARD.

The meekness makes the yoke easy ; the lowliness makes the burden light.—BENGEL.

The yoke of Christ's commands is an easy yoke ; it is not only easy, but gracious, so the word signifies ; it is sweet and pleasant ; there is nothing in it to gall the yielding neck, nothing to hurt us, but, on the contrary, much to refresh us. It is a yoke that is lined with love.—M. HENRY.

How shall any man be brought willingly and gently to bend his neck, unless, by putting on meekness, he be conformed to Christ ? That this is the meaning of the words is plain ; for Christ, after exhorting His disciples to bear His *yoke*, and desirous to prevent them from being deterred by its difficulty, immediately adds, Learn of Me ; thus declaring that, when His example shall have accustomed us to meekness and humility, we shall no longer feel His yoke to be troublesome.—CALVIN.

No one will easily believe how anxiously for a long time I have wished to retire from these labours into a scene of tranquillity, and for the rest of my life (dwindled, it is true, to the shortest span) to converse only with Him who once cried and who still does cry, *Come unto Me, all ye that labour*. In this turbulent and, I may say, raging world, amid so many cares, which the state of the times heaps upon me in public, or which declining years and infirmity cause me in private, nothing do I find on which my mind can more comfortably repose than on this secret communion with God.

ERASMUS.

THE LORD OF THE SABBATH

For the Son of man is lord of the sabbath.

Matt. XII. 8.

SINCE the sabbath was an ordinance instituted for the use and benefit of man, the Son of Man, who had taken upon Him full and complete manhood, the great representative and Head of humanity, has this institution under His own power.—ALFORD.

He calls Himself "the lord of the sabbath"—a prophetic intimation cleared up by the event, that the law of the sabbath would be changed, as it has now been under the gospel, not by any alteration of the proportion due to God, but in the position of the day; by the transfer of it from the seventh day of the week to the first, in memory of the resurrection of the Son of Man.—BP. WORDSWORTH.

The body of the Son of Man was the truest, highest temple of God, and the disciples who ministered to Him were entitled to at least the same privilege as the priests in the Temple at Jerusalem. The range of the words is, however, wider than this their first and highest application. We are taught to think of the bodies of other sons of men as being also, in their measure, temples of God (1 Cor. vi. 19), and so there follows the conclusion that all works of love done for the bodies or the souls of men as little interfere with the holiness of a day of rest as did the ministrations of the priests as they laboured to weariness in the ritual of the Temple.—E. H. PLUMPTRE.

As naked a claim to all the authority of Him who gave the law at Sinai as could be made.—D. BROWN.

He who has ordained the Sabbath loves the poor.

O. W. HOLMES.

HIS SUPREME CLAIM

He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.

Matt. XII. 30.

THERE'S no such thing as neutrality in the Kingdom of God.—BENGEL.

In vain do men seek for methods to reconcile God and Mammon. There is no medium between loving the Lord and being his enemy—between belonging to Christ or to Satan. "He that gathereth not with me scattereth." This seems to have been a proverbial form of speech, and may be a metaphor taken from shepherds. He who does not help the true shepherd to gather his flock into the fold is, most likely, one who wishes to scatter them, that he may have the opportunity of stealing and destroying them.—A. CLARKE.

In a city the good and bad take opposite sides, and those who are neutral are suspected by both, and are regarded as the enemies of both.—F. H. DUNWELL.

In the spiritual sphere, to halt is to fall away, to stand still is to be left on the shore.—J. KER.

Nelson at Trafalgar would insist on taking his place in the fight arrayed in his proper uniform.

W. L. WATKINSON.

An instant decides the life of man and his whole fate; for after lengthened thought the resolve is only the act of a moment; it is the man of sense that seizes on the right thing to be done; it is ever dangerous to linger in your selection of this and that, and so by your hesitation get confused.—GOETHE.

He could not have spoken as He did unless He had been what He was, nor being what He was could He have continued dumb.—A. M. FAIRBAIRN.

SIMILITUDES OF THE KINGDOM

THE SOWER

And he spake to them many things in parables, saying, Behold, the sower went forth to sow.

Matt. XIII. 3.

SOWING is not the first agricultural process. The soil in its natural state will not receive the good seed and bring forth fruit. There are the primaeval forests to be cleared, there is the tangled undergrowth of thorns and briers to be removed. And then the ploughman must come with his share and break up the soil before ever there can be any harvest from the seed. "A sower went out to sow his seed." Not a pioneer with his axe, not a ploughman with his share, but a sower with his seed-basket scattering his seed. And why? Because this is pre-eminently the work of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. There was pioneer work to be done; that was done by the iron ploughshare of the law; that came first. And then, again, it is not merely that the Gospel work is this gentle work of the sower, but the sower gives to the earth that which it had not before; he gives life, he gives that which has life in itself, and which can produce life.—E. A. STUART.

The greater portion of the seed is not lost through the fault of the owner, but of the earth, which received it, that is, of the soul, which hears. And indeed the real husbandman, if he sowed in this way, would be rightly blamed; for he is not ignorant that rock, or the road, or thorny ground, cannot become fertile. But in spiritual things it is not so; for there it is possible that stony ground may become fertile; and that the road should not be trodden down, and that the thorns may be destroyed, for if this could not take place, He would not have sown there. By this therefore He gives to us hope of repentance.—CHRYSOSTOM.

THE TARES

Another parable set he before them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man that sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat, and went away.

Matt. XIII. 24, 25.

THERE is an enemy abroad in the world, an enemy of God, and in recognising that and facing the worst, we can recover our calm. This earth, this human life, ceases to appear to us as the scene of moral confusion in which good is for ever tumbling into blunders. No, life is a battle-ground, and there is a foe in front of us to fight, a foe bent on spoiling our good, on hurting us, on ruining our golden corn. And what a relief, what a comfort, as we look on at some cruel disaster that has overtaken us, at the broken fragments of some good joy, to say, not, " God has done it," but " The one who hates God—he has done it. The enemy hath done it." As we read it, our stronger manhood rises to the ring of the war-cry, " The foe is on us! Help, in the name of the Lord! " No longer whining, no longer protesting, we brace ourselves as soldiers called to sterner work. We set our faces like a flint.

H. SCOTT HOLLAND.

Wherever the good is in the increase, the evil becomes more apparent.—BENGEL.

It makes much for the beauty of the parable, and is full of instruction, that wheat and tares are not seeds of different kinds, but that the last is a degenerate or bastard wheat.—TRENCH.

The world in all doth but two nations bear,
The good, the bad, and these mixed everywhere.

MARVELL.

THE MUSTARD SEED

Another parable set he before them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is less than all seeds; but when it is grown, it is greater than the herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the heaven come and lodge in the branches thereof.

Matt. XIII. 31-32.

THIS seed, when cast into the ground, is "the least of all seeds"—words which have often perplexed interpreters, as there are many seeds, as of poppy or rue, that are smaller. Yet difficulties of this kind are not worth making; it is sufficient to know that "small as a grain of mustard seed" was a proverbial expression among the Jews for something exceedingly minute. The Lord, in His popular teaching, adhered to the popular language. And was not His kingdom even such? What, to the eye of flesh, could be less magnificent, what could have less of promise, than the commencements of that kingdom in His own person? Such was the commencement of the universal Kingdom of God. For in this that kingdom differs from the great schemes of this world; these last have a proud beginning, a shameful and miserable end—towers of Babel, which at first threaten to be as high as heaven, but end in being a deserted misshapen heap of slime and bricks; while the works of God, and most of all His great work, His Church, have a slight and unobserved beginning, with gradual increase, and a glorious consummation. So is it with His kingdom in the world; so is it with His kingdom in every single heart: there too the word of Christ falls like a slight mustard seed, seeming to promise little, but issuing in great results.—TRENCH.

THE LEAVEN

Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till it was all leavened.

Matt. XIII. 33.

IT was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character which throughout all the changes of eighteen centuries has inspired the hearts of men with an impassioned love; has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments, and conditions; has not only been the highest pattern of virtue, but the strongest incentive to its practice; and has exercised so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and to soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists. This has, indeed, been the well-spring of whatever is best and purest in the Christian life. Amid all the sins and failings, amid all the priestcraft and persecution and fanaticism that has defaced the Church, it has preserved in the example and character of its Founder an enduring principle of regeneration.—LECKY.

This parable describes the *inward* growth of Christ's kingdom in the hearts of its subjects; or, in other words, its purifying and sanctifying power. It is needed to fill up and complete the picture of the growth of the Church of Christ. If we had only the "mustard seed," we might fix our eyes too much upon the outward increase of the Church in size and number.

W. How.

The gospel is like leaven—sour to the natural spirit.—ADAMS.

THE HID TREASURE

The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in the field; which a man found, and hid; and in his joy he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.
Matt. XIII. 44.

WE commonly set a high value on what is visible, and therefore the new and spiritual life, which is held out to us in the Gospel, is little esteemed by us, because it is *hidden*, and lies in hope. There is the highest appropriateness in comparing it to a *treasure*, the value of which is in no degree diminished, though it be buried in the earth and withdrawn from the eyes of men. These words teach us that we ought not to estimate the grace of God according to the views of our flesh, or according to their outward display, but in the same manner as a *treasure*, though it be hidden, is preferred to a vain appearance of wealth.—CALVIN.

In the interpretation of the parable, the case described is that of a man who, not having started in the pursuit of holiness or truth, is brought by the seeming accidents of life—a chance meeting, a word spoken in season, the example of a living holiness—to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, i.e. to Christ Himself, and who, finding in Him a peace and joy above all earthly treasure, is ready to sacrifice the lower wealth to obtain the higher.—E. H. PLUMPTRE.

The Kingdom of God is as treasure hid in a field; and of those who profess to help us to seek for it, we are not to put confidence in those who say, Here is the treasure, we have found it, and have it, and will give you some of it; but in those who say, We think that is a good place to dig, and you will dig most easily in such and such a way.—RUSKIN.

THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a merchant seeking goodly pearls: and having found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it.
Matt. XIII. 45–46.

THE caprices of luxury in the Roman empire had given a prominence to pearls, as an article of commerce, which they had never had before, and have probably never had since. They, rather than emeralds and sapphires, were the typical instance of all costliest adornments. The fact that the opening of a new pearl-market was one of the alleged motives which led the Emperor Claudius to invade Britain, are indications of the value that was then set on the " goodly pearls " of the parable. Such a merchant seeking them, either on the shores of the Mediterranean or as brought by caravans to other traders from the Persian Gulf or the Indian Ocean, must have been a familiar presence to the fishermen of Capernaum.—E. H. PLUMPTRE.

Except thou sell all, thou buyest not; except thou have such a soul, anxious and inquiring, thou findest not.—CHRYSOSTOM.

A man seeking goodly pearls has found one pearl of great price; that is, he who is seeking good men with whom he may live profitably, finds one alone, Christ Jesus, without sin; or, seeking precepts of life, by aid of which he may dwell righteously among men, finds love of his neighbour, in which one rule, the Apostle says, are comprehended all things; or seeking good thoughts, he finds that Word in which all things are contained, which is lustrous with the light of truth, steadfast with the strength of eternity, and throughout like to itself with the beauty of divinity.—AUGUSTINE.

THE DRAWNET

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was filled, they drew up on the beach; and they sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but the bad they cast away.

Matt. XIII. 47–48.

AS the wheat must not be removed from the floor before the time of winnowing; nor the tares gathered out of the field before the time of reaping; nor the good fish break through the net, to get from the bad before the time of separation; so must not Christians forsake the Church's communion, because of the present mixture of good and bad in it.—W. BURKITT.

The net of faith holds good and bad mingled together in one; but the shore shall discover what the net of the Church has brought.—GREGORY THE GREAT.

It is worth our while to consider what manner of net it is to which our Lord likens the Kingdom of heaven. In the heading of the chapter in our Bibles, it is called a *draw*net, and the particular kind is distinctly specified by the word in the original. The seine or sean, for the Greek word has been naturalised in English, reaching us through the Vulgate and Anglo-Saxon, is a net of the largest size, suffering nothing to escape from it; and this its all-embracing nature is certainly not to be left out of sight as an accidental or unimportant circumstance, but contains in fact a prophecy of the wide reach and effectual inclusion of the Gospel. The Kingdom of heaven should henceforward be a net, not cast into a single stream as hitherto, but into the broad sea of the whole world, and gathering some *of every kind*, some out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation.—TRENCH.

THE GROWTH OF THE KINGDOM

TRUE PRINCELINESS

For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her.

Matt. XIV. 3–4.

THE first thought which suggests itself is, that a magnificent career is cut short too soon. At the very outset of ripe and experienced manhood, the whole thing ends in failure. John's day of active usefulness is over; at thirty years of age his work is done; and what permanent effect have all his labours left? The crowds that listened to his voice, awed into silence by Jordan's side, we hear of them no more. Was all indeed failure? No, it was sublimest victory. John's work was no failure; he left behind him no sect to which he had given his name, but his disciples passed into the service of Christ, and were absorbed in the Christian Church. Words from John had made impressions, and men forgot in after-years *where* the impressions first came from, but the day of judgment will not forget. John laid the foundations of a temple, and others built upon it. There is a lesson for us in all that, if we will learn it. Work, true work, done honestly and manfully for Christ, *never* can be a failure.—F. W. ROBERTSON.

The days of pleasure are often the Vigils of Repentance.—GRATIAN.

Worldly honour, instead of being a finer form of moral life, may be more truly described as the shadow, or ghost, of virtue deceased.—S. T. COLERIDGE.

It is great sin to swear unto a sin,
But greater sin to keep a sinful oath.

SHAKESPEARE.

ROYAL BOUNTY

And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up that which remained over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. And they that did eat were about five thousand men, beside women and children.
Matt. XIV. 20–21.

NEVER waste. You are in the great household of God, and in that household there is to be no waste. The veriest scrap of food, or clothes, or property of any kind, has its proper use. If you do not want it, another does. Be careful to turn it to account. Because you have sat down to the rich banquet which God has spread for you, and because more has been poured into your lap than you can consume yourself, it is no justification for the bits that are lost. They are someone's, though you despise them. But the rule applies to much more than those things which can be measured by money. Let us never forget that the true nourishment and life of every man is the Lord Jesus Christ. In this, the great reality far exceeds the type of the miracle. And how much have we lost, of the Christ which has been offered for us! Many a precious thing of Christ has passed before your view, and been, as it were, in your hands, which has never entered into your heart, and mingled with your life's blood. Therefore, go about on every field of memory, and of imagination, and of thought, and of reason, and of love, and "gather up" the sweet "fragments" of Jesus, that "nothing be lost."

J. VAUGHAN.

He commands them to sit down on the trampled grass, instructing the multitudes in self-denial. For His will was not to feed their bodies only, but also to instruct their souls.—CHRYSOSTOM.

ON HEATHEN GROUND

And he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs. But she said, Yea, Lord: for even the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it done unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was healed from that hour.

Matt. XV. 26-28.

I CANNOT but think that the truest and simplest way to look at this beautiful story is to consider it as a record of the spiritual necessities of Jesus. The idea which seems to me to be in it is this, that Jesus gave the woman what she wanted just as soon as it was possible for Him to give it; and that, just as soon as it was possible for Him to give it, in some true sense He had to give it, it was impossible for Him to refuse it any longer. He was not holding it, as it were, behind His back, watching her face to see when was the best moment to give it to her. He was telling her of a genuine impossibility when He said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." He could not give her what she wanted then; but when by her belief in Him she had crossed the line and become spiritually one of His people, then the impossibility was removed, and we may even say, I think, that He could not help helping her.—PHILLIPS BROOKS.

The facts seem naturally to make, and to see, in what passed, the prevailing power of prayer working on the sympathy of Christ, and leading Him to pass beyond the ordinary limits of His appointed work.

E. H. PLUMPTRE.

When God is slow in giving, He only sets off His own gifts to advantage.—AUGUSTINE.

THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS

THE CRUCIAL QUESTION

He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am?
Matt. XVI. 15.

HE presses the question closer home upon His disciples. The outer world might speak vaguely of Him, as of something wonderful and extraordinary, without caring to examine more closely into His claim; but of those who were to constitute His Church an exacter knowledge was required.—Bp. Gore.

It is neither out of idleness, curiosity, nor pride that He inquires concerning what the world says of Him, but through a necessity of instructing His disciples, and correcting false reports. By taking the mean and humble title "Son of Man," He confounds the vanity of men, who are apt to be puffed up with their great titles.—Quesnel.

The disciples by a second question are invited to higher thoughts than the opinion of the common people. They had been in close company with Him and ought not to agree with the crowd.—Chrysostom.

So closely art Thou in God's heart,
And God so close in Thine;
I marvel which is human part,
And which is Thy divine.

Philpot.

Human characters are always reduced in their eminence, and the impressions of awe they have raised, by a closer and more complete acquaintance. But it was not so with Christ. With His disciples, in closest terms of intercourse, for three whole years; their brother, friend, teacher, monitor, guest, fellow-traveller; seen by them under all the conditions of public ministry, and private society, He is yet visibly raising their sense of His degree and quality.—Bushnell.

THE SATISFYING ANSWER

And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.

Matt. XVI. 16–18.

IT is hard to put into words a struggling and half-formed conviction. But a conviction, to gain reality, must dare to utter itself; and St. Peter it is who obeys the promptings of the Spirit which all were secretly acknowledging. "Thou art the Christ," he cries, "the Son of the living God." This is what our Lord had wanted. This is what He was waiting for. He fixes this bold confession with His emphatic benediction: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; and I say unto thee, in virtue of this thy bold confession, thou art Peter, rock-man. This confession of My name turns the shifting sands of humanity into solid rock. Upon this rock I will build My Church."—Bp. Gore.

Boileau says somewhere that the Church is a great thought which every man ought to study. It would be more practical to say that the Church is a great fact which every man ought to measure. Probably we Christians are too familiarised with the blessed presence of the Church to do justice to her as a world-embracing institution, and as the nurse and guardian of our moral and mental life. The Christian Church pours even upon those of us who love her least, floods of intellectual and moral light. It is only by an effort that we understand how intrinsically extraordinary is the double fact of her perpetuated existence and of her continuous expansion.—Liddon.

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE CROSS

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

Matt. XVI. 24.

FIRST, He simply proclaims, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand"; then He explains the principles and laws of that kingdom in the Sermon on the Mount; then in the parables by the sea, He sets forth in figures the nature of its progress and the obstacles it will encounter; but not until, by no direct word of His, but by gradual acquaintance with Him, the disciples have come to the full faith that He is the Messiah, the Son of God, does He begin to foretell to them His cross.—LYMAN ABBOTT.

Christ confirmed His Apostles in their confession of His Messianic dignity. But He knew that their minds were still tinctured with the ordinary ideas and expectations of a visible kingdom to be founded by Messiah; and He, therefore, gradually taught them that it was by *His own sufferings* that the Kingdom of God was to be established.—NEANDER.

I think it will appear to a diligent reader of the Gospels, that our Saviour almost always followed up His invitations, given to great efforts of self-denial and praises of them, with some cautionary words or actions, intimating humility and soberness of mind. The promise to St. Peter, that he should have the "keys of the Kingdom of Heaven," was succeeded by the earnest warning to "take up the cross and follow Christ."—J. KEBLE.

It is the cause for which we suffer, and not the mere act of suffering that makes us martyrs.

AUGUSTINE.

A FOREGLEAM OF GLORY

And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart: and he was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his garments became white as the light.

Matt. XVII. 1–2.

WHAT other hill could it have been than the southward slope of that goodly mountain, Hermon, which is, indeed, the centre of all the promised land, from the entering in of Hamath to the river of Egypt; the mount of fruitfulness, from which the springs of Jordan descended to the valleys of Israel? Along its mighty forest avenues, until the grass grew fair with the mountain lilies, His feet dashed with the dew of Hermon, He must have gone to pray His first recorded prayer about death; and from the steep of it, before He knelt, could see, to the south, all the dwelling-places of the people that had sat in darkness, and seen the great light, the land of Zabulon and of Naphthali, Galilee of the Gentiles; could see even with His human sight the gleam of that lake by Capernaum and Chorazin, and many a place loved by Him and vainly ministered to, whose house was now left unto them desolate; and chief of all, far in the utmost blue, the hills above Nazareth, sloping down to His old home; hills on which the stones yet lay loose that had been taken up to cast at Him, when He left them for ever.—RUSKIN.

As the doctrine of Christ's Person was followed immediately by the doctrine of the Cross, so to this succeeds the doctrine of Glory.—BENGEL.

Despise not *the cloud* of His flesh. The Sun is enveloped in a cloud that His brightness may be tempered, not obscured.—AUGUSTINE.

CITIZENSHIP IN THE KINGDOM

AMBITION REBUKED

In that hour came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And he called to him a little child, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Matt. XVIII. 1-3.

AMBITION sleeps even in the breast of Apostles.

CYPRIAN.

Their very failings are above us. For our inquiry is not, "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of *Heaven*?" but "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of *the world*?"

CHRYSOSTOM.

I was once considering what the reason was why our Lord loved humility in us so much, when I suddenly remembered that He is essentially the Supreme Truth, and that humility is just our walking in the truth. For it is a very great truth that we have no good in us, but only misery and nothingness, and he who does not understand this walks in lies: but he who understands this best is the most pleasing to the Supreme Truth.—TERESA.

Ambition is a subtle evil and hidden poison, a secret pestilence, the author of deceit, the mother of hypocrisy, the parent of malice, a source of vices, the fuel of crimes, the rust of virtues, the moth of sanctity, the blinder of hearts, creating diseases out of remedies, engendering sickness out of medicine. How many has this pestilence wickedly supplanted, and also basely overthrown; so that others, who had not detected this occult sapper of the foundations, have been suddenly terrified at the sight of their ruin. But what nourishes this worm so much as distraction of mind and forgetfulness of the Truth? For what but Truth can discover this work of darkness?—BERNARD.

FORGIVENESS

Then came Peter, and said to him, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? until seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven.

Matt. XVIII. 21-22.

JESUS went as far beyond Peter as Peter went beyond the rabbis; nay, infinitely further, for He said, "Not till seven times, but until seventy times seven." That is, times without number; your forgivenesses must be as numerous as the implacable man's revenges; you must never weary of pardoning offences.—A. B. BRUCE.

Men seldom consult casuists save when it is to justify, if possible, their natural and corrupt inclinations.—QUESNEL.

Not that we are hereby obliged to take the frequent offender into our bosom, and to make him our intimate friend; but to lay aside all malice, and all thoughts and desires of revenge, and to stand ready to do him any service of love and friendship.—W. BURKITT.

If you are exchanging measurable maxims for immeasurable principles, you are surely rising from the mason to the architect. "Seven times"?—no—no—no—seventy times seven. No maxim—a heart principle. I wonder whether St. Peter *wholly understood* that, or got a very clear *conception* from it.

F. W. ROBERTSON.

His (Abraham Lincoln's) heart was as big as the world, but there was no room in it for the memory of a wrong.—EMERSON.

If thy brother act unjustly, do not think of his injustice, but rather that he is thy brother.

EPICTETUS.

CHILDLIKENESS

Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should lay his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.

Matt. XIX. 13–14.

THE mind of a child is pure and free from all vicious passions. It does not remember injuries, nor meditate upon revenge. In like manner, although a child may be severely chastised by its mother, yet will it run to her before anyone else, and is attached to her more than to any other woman. And if you show it a queen with a diadem upon her head, in no wise would it prefer her to its mother clothed in rags. It would rather see its mother clothed in rags than a queen in her royal apparel. Then a child requires nothing more than nature demands. Thus as soon as it is satisfied, it leaves its mother's breasts. Moreover, it is never grieved at the loss of these things, of which we make so great account, such as money and jewels. Lastly, it is not carried away by corporeal beauty, as other human beings are. Wherefore the Lord saith, "Of such is the Kingdom of heaven." Assuredly by them He doth admonish us, that we should do such things by the firm choice of our own will, which little children do by natural endowment.

CHRYSOSTOM.

Pride is the first vice to oppose us; and the last vice which we overcome.—BERNARD.

One who grew up to a perfect man and to possess all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, yet never left behind, as we do, the things which make childhood attractive.—J. G. GREENHOUGH.

THE HIGHEST GOOD

The young man saith unto him, All these things have I observed: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wouldest be perfect, go, sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. But when the young man heard the saying, he went away sorrowful: for he was one that had great possessions.

Matt. XIX. 20–22.

IF thou neglectest thy love to thy neighbour, in vain thou professest thy love to God: for by thy love to God thy love to thy neighbour is begotten; and by thy love to thy neighbour thy love to God is nourished.—QUARLES.

The love of money in its longing desires proves far more harassing to the mind than a source of pleasure; inasmuch as labour accompanies the acquisition of wealth, fear its possession, *sorrow* its loss.—BERNARD.

Though I have not been rich, I am not on that account less responsible; for neither were the Apostles rich, who forsook their all before me: but that man renounces the world, who renounces both his possessions in it and his expectations from it.—AUGUSTINE.

Temptations connected with money are indeed among the most insidious and among the most powerful to which we are exposed. They have probably a wider empire than drink, and, unlike the temptations that spring from animal passions, they strengthen rather than diminish with age.—W. E. H. LECKY.

Sorrowful—at not being able to retain his wealth and follow Jesus at the same time. To have obeyed would have swallowed up all his sorrow.—BENGEL.

He desired to be an extraordinary man, therefore he had an extraordinary trial.—E. LEIGH.

"UNTO THIS LAST"

Take up that which is thine, and go thy way; it is my will to give unto this last, even as unto thee.

Matt. XX. 14.

THOSE who have worked all day murmur at being thus put on a level with those who have worked but one hour, and are rebuked for their grudging spirit. So, we are told, the last shall be first, and the first last. The general lesson is clear that we are no fit judges of God's dealings with ourselves or with others; and that a grudging, grasping spirit especially will be rebuked by Him. To enforce this rebuke was, it would seem, the chief object of the parable. Those who serve for reward will be paid their reward and nothing more. We must not murmur at the Lord's generosity to others with whom He has made no compact, and who have entered His service in general reliance upon His character. If we murmur or grumble we shall receive the stipulated wages, but coupled with a severe rebuke, and possibly a sentence of dismissal from further employment. "Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee." Clearly, then, those who make no bargain, and who depend wholly on the Master's goodness, will not suffer by their confidence, while those who make a bargain, and treat life in His service as a matter of business, will be in danger of being placed last in His Kingdom, and perhaps wholly turned away from working any more for Him.

BP. WORDSWORTH.

There is one thing asked for—just work; work that lays some stress upon the character and so proves its weakness and its worth; work that may indeed be

disappointing in its results by the mischances of life, or by the weakness of the doer, but yet shall have achieved the true inner purpose in testing the will, the perseverance, the patience, the determination, the cheerfulness, the virtue, of him or her who by the mere fact of working, though they have failed to win the fruit of their toil—yes, and may have failed through their own infirmities, nevertheless are justified in that they have discharged their responsibility towards Christ and His Kingdom, and have shown themselves, by the efforts they have spent, to be at least striving to follow the example of the Father who worketh hitherto.—H. SCOTT HOLLAND.

Men must know that, in this theatre of man's life, it is reserved only for God and Angels to be lookers-on.—BACON.

There is some virtue, or other, to be always exercised, whatever happens; either patience or thanksgiving, love or fear, moderation or humility, charity or contentedness.—JEREMY TAYLOR.

Religion pressed heavily upon the Jews, because they were unequal to it, and it was as the *mid-heat*, overpowering them with intensity, because they had no protection against it. This was *the burden and heat of the day*, to have a perfect law and an unregenerate heart; the thunders of Sinai, yet the sovereignty of the flesh; Moses with the Tables of Stone, and the people setting up the golden calf.—NEWMAN.

Nothing but humility can either keep the *first* in grace from becoming *last*; or draw down that mercy on the *last*, which shall make them first.—QUESNEL.

To offend God is a sin; but to consider ourselves offended by Him is a still greater one, and more frequent of commission than we imagine.—BENGEL.

REWARD IN THE KINGDOM

Then came to him the mother of the sons of Zebedee with her sons, worshipping him, and asking a certain thing of him.

Matt. XX. 20.

WE gather from this Scripture that there is a sense in which every man's destinies are in his own hands. It is not by an arbitrary decree that heaven's highest places are given away. Christ bestows them on those for whom they are prepared by the Father. Those things which " eye hath not seen nor ear heard " He has prepared for those who love Him. He has prepared them for the meek and humble in heart. He has prepared them for those who have with the most scrupulous fidelity borne the cross. There is also a sense in which every man's future depends upon himself. Each place is regulated according to the way in which each man has fitted himself for it. What you are here, that by a most righteous regulation you will be hereafter.—F. W. ROBERTSON.

My mother had, as she afterwards told me, solemnly " devoted me to God " before I was born ; in imitation of Hannah. Very good women are remarkably apt to make away with their children prematurely, in this manner : the real meaning of the pious act being, that, as the sons of Zebedee are not (or at least they hope not) to sit on the right and left of Christ, in His Kingdom, their own sons may perhaps, they think, in time be advanced to that respectable position in eternal life ; especially if they ask Christ very humbly for it every day ; and they always forget in the most naïve way that the position is not His to give !—RUSKIN.

The Kingdom of heaven is not so much of Him that giveth, as of him that receiveth.—BEDE.

THE KING IN JUDGMENT

THE ROYAL ENTRY

And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, Who is this? *Matt. XXI.* 10.

THE "hosanna" was taken out of Psalm cxviii. 26, and St. Matthew gives the Hebrew words that we may know that applause was not given rashly to Christ, but reverently followed that form of prayer which the Holy Ghost had dictated to the Church by the mouth of the prophet.—CALVIN.

Whom we have hitherto acknowledged as a prophet we now honour as the true King.—E. LEIGH.

There was nothing stately or magnificent. Sion's King comes to Sion, and yet He has no welcome but that of the common people. But according to the best of their capacity they studied to do honour to Him. Some think their garments were spread, not upon the ground, but on the hedges or walls, to adorn the roads; as to beautify a cavalcade the balconies are hung with tapestry.—M. HENRY.

Then do we go to meet Christ with boughs of olives, when we exercise the works of mercy and of charity; and with the branch of palm, when we bear away the victory against any temptation; and we strew our garments under the feet of Christ, when we lay down our lives for the love of Christ and in defence of His holy faith.—BONAVENTURA.

Receive Christ as the disciples received Him, as the true God and eternal life. Sages of the earth, He is the key of your problems; troubled spirits, your peace; lovers of wealth, your true treasure; He is the word which solves the enigma of life and conquers the power of death. Without Him, we are continually reduced laboriously to construct poor imitations of happiness.—VINET.

KINGLY AUTHORITY

And Jesus entered into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought.
Matt. XXI. 12.

MANY think that the mightiest sign in the attestation of our Lord was the raising of Lazarus, or that the man born blind received sight, or that the voice of the Father was heard at the Jordan, or that Christ transfigured on the mount appeared in the glory of a conqueror. To me, however, it appears that amid all the signs of our Lord this was the most wonderful; that one single man, at a time, too, when He was an object of scorn and accounted so vile, as soon after to be crucified, while the Scribes and Pharisees moreover were furiously raging against Him, on account of the loss through Him of their worldly gain, should nevertheless have succeeded with a simple scourge of small cords in driving out of the temple so vast a multitude, overthrowing the tables and the seats and doing other like things, which scarcely a whole troop of soldiers could have accomplished. For indeed something of a fiery, star-like appearance shone from His eyes, and His countenance was lighted up with the majesty of the Godhead.—JEROME.

It is said, My house shall be called a house of prayer; the house of prayer, not of preaching. It appears that as preaching is the more original, so prayer is the more final; the difference is between the seed and the fruit; for the keeping of God's law is the fruit of the teaching of the law; and prayer, or invocation, or Divine service, or Liturgy, for these be but varieties of terms, is the immediate hallowing of the Name of God, and the principal work of the great Commandment of the Love of God.—BACON.

THE TWO SONS

But what think ye? A man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in the vineyard. And he answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented himself, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Whether of the twain did the will of his father? They say, The first.
Matt. XXI. 28–31.

LET us mark what Christ said. He did *not* say that it was better to say "I will not" to God's command, than to say "I go, sir," without really going. What He *did* say was that those who refuse to obey God's call, *but afterwards repent*, are better than those who profess to obey but never go beyond profession.—W. How.

A life of repentance of past sins, inflamed with love towards God, is more pleasing to Him than a state of innocence, benumbed under the feeling of self-security.—GREGORY THE GREAT.

There is in the first son a happy change of mind; upon second thoughts he changed his ways.

M. HENRY.

When that task of answering the king's defence was enjoined me by public authority, being both in an ill state of health, and the sight of one eye almost gone already, the physicians openly predicting the loss of both, if I undertook this labour; yet nothing terrified by their premonition, I did not long balance whether my duty should be preferred to my eyes.

MILTON.

He that is warm to-day and cold to-morrow, zealous in his resolution and weary in his practices, fierce in the beginning and slack and easy in his progress, hath not chosen what side he will take.—J. TAYLOR.

THE WICKED HUSBANDMEN

Hear another parable: There was a man that was a householder, which planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about it, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into another country.

Matt. XXI. 33.

BY the Householder is meant God; the vine is the Jewish people planted by God in the land of promise. The hedge round them is the Law separating them from the Gentiles; or the Divine protection like a wall of fire around them. The tower is the temple; the winepress is the altar; the husbandmen the teachers of the people, the Scribes and Pharisees.—THEOPHYLACT.

In this parable of the vineyard, the prophets of the Old Testament are contrasted with the Son, not as His predecessors or rivals, but as His servants. He is alone free by birthright among a race of born slaves. Yet, instead of guarding His solitary dignity with jealous exclusiveness, He vouchsafes to raise the servants or slaves around Him to an adopted sonship; He will buy them out of bondage; He will lay down His life that He may prove the generosity of His measureless love towards them.—H. P. LIDDON.

As a history, the parable contains a history of the way in which God had sought to protect the Jewish nation, and render them fruitful. As a prophecy, the parable foretells the way in which the Heir would be put to death, and the nation would be destroyed.

F. H. DUNWELL.

Christ spake this parable that He might reprove the priests for their unthankfulness and infidelity; and that He might take away the offence which might be taken at His death, which was so near at hand.—E. LEIGH.

THE WEDDING FEAST

And Jesus answered and spake again in parables unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a certain king, which made a marriage feast for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the marriage feast: and they would not come.

Matt. XXII. 1–3.

THE appearance of the householder (of the previous parable) as the king, announces that the sphere in which this parable moves is the New Testament dispensation—is the kingdom, announced before, but only actually present with the coming of the king. That last was a parable of the Old Testament history; even Christ Himself appears there rather as the last and greatest of the line of prophets and teachers, than as the founder of a new kingdom. In that, a parable of the law, God appears demanding something from men; in this, a parable of grace, God appears more as giving something to them. There, He is displeased that His demands are not complied with—here, that His goodness is not accepted; there He requires, here He imparts. And thus, as we so often find, the two mutually complete one another; this taking up the matter, where the other left it.—TRENCH.

God, though He be free of His entertainments, yet is curious of His guests.—BP. HALL.

The framework of the parable probably pre-supposes the Oriental custom of providing garments for the guests who were invited to a royal feast. On this assumption, the act of the man who was found "not having a wedding garment" was one of wilful insult. He refused to honour his host's desires.

E. H. PLUMPTRE.

THE GREAT COMMANDMENT

And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

Matt. XXII. 35–36.

A QUESTION is asked respecting "*the great* Commandment" by one who had not performed the least. Let those rather, who have been careful to observe the lower degrees of righteousness, make inquiries about such degrees as are higher.—CHRYSOSTOM.

All the precepts are comprised in love alone.

BERNARD.

Holy Scripture forbids but one thing, which is *covetousness* and the love of the creature; and it commands but one thing, which is *charity* and the love of God. Upon this double rule is established all Christian morality.—AUGUSTINE.

"On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets"; that is, this is the sum and substance of all those precepts relating to practical religion which were written in men's hearts by nature, revived by Moses, and backed and enforced by the preaching and writing of the prophets. All hang upon the law of love; take away this, and all falls to the ground, and comes to nothing. Rituals and ceremonials must give way to these, as must all spiritual gifts, for love is the more excellent way. This is the spirit of the law, which animates it, the cement of the law, which joins it; it is the root and spring of all other duties, the compendium of the whole Bible, not only of the law and the prophets, but of the gospel too, only supposing this love to be the fruit of faith, and that we love God in Christ and our neighbour for His sake.—M. HENRY.

THE DOOM OF THE HYPOCRITE

But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye shut the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye enter not in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering in to enter.

Matt. XXIII. 13.

FEAR not *true* Pharisees, but greatly fear *painted* Pharisees.—ALEXANDER JANNÆUS.

The supreme tribunal will duly punish hypocrites who wrap their *talliths* around them to appear, which they are not, true Pharisees.

R. NACHAMAN.

It is not alone the hypocrisy of Jerusalem which is denounced. In this marvellous picture, every line of which is drawn in ineffaceable colours, the Pharisaism of every age sees its own image. Wherever are found formal worship, false devotion, proud scorn of the small ones of the world, inordinate self-estimation—wherever virtue is only a fiction, the holy imprecations of Christ resound with their solemn severity. It is not offended holiness only which speaks, it is also love—the true charity which cannot suffer that which kills the soul.—DE PRESSENSÉ.

The world hates hypocrites, because they seem good. God hates them, because they only seem good.

QUARLES.

Bended knees, whilst you are clothed with pride; heavenly petitions, whilst you are hoarding up treasures on earth; holy devotions, whilst you live in the follies of the world; prayers of meekness and charity, while you give up days and years to idle diversions, impertinent visits, and foolish pleasures—these are as absurd and unacceptable a service to God as forms of thanksgiving from a person who lives in repinings and in discontent.—LAW.

FOREWARNED, FOREARMED

And Jesus went out from the temple, and was going on his way; and his disciples came to him to shew him the buildings of the temple. But he answered and said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

Matt. XXIV. 1-2.

THE disciples undoubtedly perceived that Christ was paying, as it were, His last adieu to the temple. It remained therefore that He should erect a new *temple* far more magnificent, and that He should produce a more flourishing condition of the kingdom, as had been foretold by the Prophets; for He had nothing to do with that temple, in which everything was opposed to Him. But the disciples could not believe that the magnificent splendour of the temple would give way to Christ. They do not, indeed, in express terms acknowledge their hesitation, but they tacitly throw out a suggestion of it, when they allege, in opposition to Christ, the mass of *stones* which must be got out of the way, and which must indeed be utterly laid low if He intended to reign. Nor is it without reason that they admire the *stones* which, Josephus tells us, were superlatively beautiful, and were twenty-five cubits in length, twelve in height, and eight in breadth. Besides, so great was the reverence entertained for the temple even in remote districts, that scarcely any person would venture to suppose that it could ever be destroyed.—CALVIN.

Josephus relates that Titus ordered the whole city and the temple to be dug up, leaving only two or three of the chief towers, so that those who visited it could see its desolation.—E. H. PLUMPTRE.

WATCH!

Watch therefore: for ye know not on what day your Lord cometh.
Matt. XXIV. 42.

HIS coming looks in upon the whole life of His Church, as a lofty mountain peak looks in upon every little valley and sequestered home around its base, and belongs to them all alike. Every generation lies under the shadow of it, for whatever is transcendently great is constantly near, and in moments of high conviction it absorbs petty interests and annihilates intervals.—J. KER.

We are as those who watch for the morning. We look for any streaks of light on the mountain heights which may encourage us to hope that the whole curtain of mist which hangs around us may at last vanish away.—A. P. STANLEY.

The sentinel on the heights, St. Paul, cried aloud to the Christians of his day. To-day the unsleeping, watchful sentinel is the Church. She echoes his cry; she will rouse men if she can. There are streaks in the eastern sky; there is a great Day coming. It will come. When, I know not; wise men know not; the saints at rest know not; the angels know not; but the Great God knoweth. "And if He shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, . . . blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching."—J. B. C. MURPHY.

Perhaps the nearest thing we have on earth to the Second Advent are those drawings near and those clear manifestations of Christ, here and there, bright and wonderful! which come to His people's hearts. The believer learns, as he goes on, to take them almost as pledges of the dawn.—J. VAUGHAN.

THE TEN VIRGINS

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were foolish, and five were wise.

Matt. XXV. 1-2.

IT is not in quiet and untroubled times, when the lamp of life seems to burn gaily without any effort of our own, it is not in the "seasons of calm weather," that the true character is made manifest, but in the sudden awakening call —the midnight cries—the crises of life, that what has been "hidden" is "revealed." These comings of the Bridegroom, these solemn crises, these revealing moments, are, according to our Lord, but the foreshadowing and premonition of one other greater than all; and the last judgment is to be the final revelation of character.—H. R. GAMBLE.

Here lies the sole difference between the wise and the foolish: the wise had private additional store of oil hid away in their own little vessels, so that the lamp lighted for them may be trimmed and refilled by their own peculiar oil. The common inheritance of grace brought down to us by a catholic Church—this is the beginning of salvation. But this cannot carry us through, unless deep in our own secret heart of hearts we have stored up the hidden oil of expectant love.—H. SCOTT HOLLAND.

The *fire* of the lamps represents the gracious light, warmth, and purification, which we passively receive from the Spirit of God; but the *oil* is what must be obtained by diligent prayer, and in faithful obedience, in the way of nourishing and increasing this light, warmth, and purification.—BENGEL.

It is not enough once to be prepared for our duty unless we continue to the end.—CALVIN.

THE TALENTS

For it is as when a man, going into another country, called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one; to each according to his several ability; and he went on his journey.
Matt. XXV. 14–15.

THE unfaithful servant was he that had but *one* talent; doubtless there are many that have five talents and bury them all, great abilities, great advantages, and yet do no good with them; but Christ would hint to us, that if he that had but one talent be reckoned with thus for burying that one, much more will they be counted offenders that have more, that have many and bury them. Many times those who have least to do for God, do least of what they have to do. Some make it an excuse for their laziness, that they have not the opportunities of serving God that others have; and because they have not wherewithal to do what they say they would, they will not do what we are sure they can, and so sit down and do nothing; it is really an aggravation of their sloth, that when they have but one talent to take care about, they neglect that one. He did not misspend or misemploy it, did not embezzle it or squander it away, but he *hid it*. He speaks as if that were no great fault; nay, as if he deserved praise for his prudence in putting it in a safe place, and running no hazards with it. Observe, what he confides in. He comes to the account with a deal of assurance, relying on the plea he had to put in, that he was able to say, "Lo, here thou hast that is thine." Many a one goes very securely to judgment, presuming upon the validity of a plea that will be overruled as vain and frivolous.—M. HENRY.

THE FINAL JUDGMENT

But when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all the nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

Matt. XXV. 31-33.

THEIR doom is already ominously foreshown in the places which they occupy, on the right or on the left; good by a natural affinity having gathered to good, and evil to evil. And thus He, to whom mercy is welcome, as judgment is a strange work, addresses Himself first to those who are the objects of His mercy, as others had been the object of theirs. Men are divided and doomed according to a single law, as they were merciful or unmerciful; according as their faith wrought in active deeds of love to their brethren, or testified that it was no faith, in that it was barren and unfruitful of these.—TRENCH.

As God sees such sins in you, as you cannot see, so He sees such graces in you, as you cannot perceive.

JEREMY TAYLOR.

The elect will be ignorant of their virtues, and the reprobate of the greatness of their crimes.—PASCAL.

If you look at the ways of the world, you would hardly think that Christians had ever read this part of Scripture.—LAW.

It is significant that the sins here are, all of them, sins of omission. As in the case of the parable of the Talents, the opportunities (here those common to all men, as there those attached to Church officers) have simply not been used.—E. H. PLUMPTRE.

THE CITY OF THE KING

THE GENIUS OF LOVE

Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.

Matt. XXVI. 13.

IT is wonderful that Christ, whose whole life was a rule and pattern of temperance and frugality, now approves of immoderate expense, which appears to have been closely allied to luxury and superfluous indulgence. But we must observe the kind of defence which He employs; for He does not maintain that the woman did right, in such a manner as if He wished that the same thing should be done every day, but maintains that what she had done in a single instance was agreeable to God, because it must have been done for a good reason. Hence we infer that certain extraordinary ways of acting are sometimes approved by God, and yet that it would be improper to make them an example. Nor have we any reason to doubt that Mary was led by a secret movement of the Spirit to anoint Christ. There was no precept in existence enjoining on Mary this anointing. Mary was directed by the inspiration of the Spirit, so that this duty, which she performed to Christ, was founded on assured confidence.—CALVIN.

Everything we have is too good for us, if we think anything we have too good for Him.—BP. HALL.

None shall ever seek to *anoint* the Lord, but they shall be anointed by Him again.—ANDREWES.

Whoever not only supports the infirmities of the weak, whether bodily or spiritual, but further, if he can and may, aids them with kindnesses, sustains them with counsel, or does not cease to help them by his prayers —whoever, I say, bestows such benefits, gives forth a balm for its sweetness.—BERNARD.

THE LAST SUPPER

Now on the first day of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, Where wilt thou that we make ready for thee to eat the passover? And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I keep the passover at thy house with my disciples.

Matt. XXVI. 17-18.

HE, which said of the one Sacrament, "Wash and be clean," said concerning the other likewise, "Eat and live." This bread hath in it more than the substance, which our eyes behold: this cup, hallowed with solemn benediction, availeth to the endless life and welfare both of soul and body; in that it serveth, as well for a medicine to heal our infirmities and purge our sins, as for a sacrifice of thanksgiving: with touching it sanctifieth; it enlighteneth with belief; it truly conformeth us unto the image of Jesus Christ. What these elements are in themselves it skilleth not. It is enough for me who take them, they are the Body and Blood of Christ. Why should any cogitation possess the mind of a faithful communicant but this?—O my God, Thou art true! O my soul, thou art happy!

HOOKER.

As often as thou callest to mind this mystery, and receivest the body of Christ, so often dost thou go over the work of thy redemption, and art made partaker of all the merits of Christ. For the love of Christ is never diminished, and the greatness of His propitiation is never exhausted. Therefore thou oughtest to dispose thyself hereunto by a constant fresh renewing of thy mind, and to weigh with attentive consideration the great mystery of salvation. So great, so new, and so joyful ought it to seem unto thee.—À KEMPIS.

GETHSEMANE

Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto his disciples, Sit ye here, while I go yonder and pray. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and sore troubled. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: abide ye here, and watch with me.

Matt. XXVI. 36–38.

I NOT only do not think that there is any need of excuse, but there is no instance in which I admire more His kindness and His majesty; for He would not have done so much for me, if He had not taken upon Him my feelings. He grieved for me, who had no cause of grief for Himself; and laying aside the delights of the eternal Godhead, He experiences the affliction of my weakness. I boldly call it *sorrow*, because I preach the cross. For He took upon Him not the appearance, but the reality, of incarnation. It was therefore necessary that He should experience grief, that He might overcome sorrow, and not shut it out; for the praise of fortitude is not bestowed on those who are rather stupefied than pained by wounds.—AMBROSE.

You may see Him, that had all rule in heaven and in earth, obey and be governed; the wisdom of God taught and instructed; that virtue which sustains all things, itself supported. That which gives us confidence itself did fear; safety itself did suffer; strength was weak; and He, who had life in Himself, did die.

BERNARD.

Lower forms of sorrow may, as it were, play with grief and vary the forms of its expression, but the deepest and sharpest agony is content to fall back upon the iteration of the self-same words.—PLUMPTRE.

THE TRAITOR

And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that is he: take him. And straightway he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, Rabbi: and kissed him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, do that for which thou art come.
Matt. XXVI. 47–50.

THE life of man furnishes many analogies that may help to clear up the enigmatical conduct of Judas. He who does not follow the impulses of good which he receives, but gives himself up to the selfish propensities which those impulses are meant to counteract, becomes finally and irrecoverably enslaved to them; all things that ought to work together for his good serve for his harm; the healing balm becomes for him a poison. This is the severe judgment upon which our free agency is conditioned.

NEANDER.

The Church has sometimes been allowed a little tranquillity by the Pagans; but seldom, or never, by her own children.—BERNARD.

No sin, ever committed by man, is such as any other man may not commit, if the Creator, by whom man was made, should leave him to himself.

AUGUSTINE.

We nowhere read that Judas ever addressed Jesus as "the Lord."—BENGEL.

Our blessed Lord Jesus called Judas *friend*, as being the instrument of bringing Him to glory, and all the world to pardon, if they would.—JEREMY TAYLOR.

Hypocrisy, the deadly crime which, like Judas, kisses
Hell at the lips of Redemption.—S. T. COLERIDGE.

BEFORE CAIAPHAS

And the high priest stood up, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said.
Matt. XXVI. 62–64.

O DEAR Jesus! what a beginning is here of a Passion! Thou there standest bound, condemned, spat upon, buffeted, derided, by malicious sinners. Thou art bound, who "camest to loose the bands of death." Thou art condemned, whose sentence must acquit the world. Thou art spat upon, that art "fairer than the sons of men." Thou art buffeted, "in whose mouth was no guile." Thou art derided, who art "clothed with glory and honour."—Bp. HALL.

As the Passion advances, its amazing *contrasts* grow in affecting interest. The Deliverer in bonds; the Judge attainted; the Prince of Glory scorned; the Holy One condemned for sin; the Son of God as a blasphemer; the Resurrection and the Life sentenced to die! The High Priest for ever condemned by the high priest of that one year! The Saviour of mankind slain by men.—STIER.

The question was the summing up of the impression made on the ecclesiastical authorities of Judaism by His whole attitude and demeanour. He did claim a Divine prerogative; and either the claim must be admitted or the charge of blasphemy urged. He died because He declared that He was the Son of God. We have here the witness that Jesus Christ assented always to the loftiest meaning that men attached to His claims.—A. MACLAREN.

PETER'S DENIAL

Then began he to curse and to swear, I know not the man. And straightway the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.

Matt. XXVI. 74–75.

THE stars have fallen from heaven. What then can I, dust of the earth, expect? They, whose works seemed praiseworthy, have fallen as low as man can fall. There is then, O Lord, no holiness, if Thou withdraw Thine hand; no chastity is secure if Thou defend it not; no vigilance can avail us if Thou fail to watch over us. For if we be left by Thee, we sink and perish. Oh, what humble and lowly thoughts should I not entertain of myself! How little should I esteem that which seems good in me! How deeply should I abase myself, O Lord, before Thy unfathomable judgments, wherein I find myself to be nothingness, mere nothingness, in the centre of Infinity. O my God, all vanity is swallowed up in the depth of Thy judgments!—À KEMPIS.

Peter denied Christ once, and wept for ever after it. We often deny Him, and never weep for it at all.

AUGUSTINE.

A small matter destroys us if we have not God's strength; a small matter restores us if His grace uses it.—QUESNEL.

Our words declare our hearts. As it may be discovered of what country a man is when he speaks; so, also, of what spirit he is.—CARYL.

The look of love, like the gentlest air of heaven, fell upon the heart-strings of his memory.

DEAN LEFROY.

BEFORE PILATE

Now Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest. And when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing.
Matt. XXVII. 11–12.

IN the days of His popularity He had refused to be made a king. He had never called Himself a king. In the hour of His deepest humiliation, when everything seemed lost except His goodness, He was most of all the King. He knew then, what we know now, that His real kingship would come from His cross, that His true crown would be woven out of these thorns and nails and spears, and that in the hours of utter weakness and shame would be laid the foundations of His world-wide throne of power. Truly it is Calvary that has made Him King.—J. G. GREENHOUGH.

It is significant that our Lord was slain by no mere drift of circumstance, but by the deliberate and confessed choice of men's wills, and that He was doomed to the cross not by the supreme Roman authority, but, before it could pass sentence, by the voice of the people. They stood outside the court, because on that day it was not lawful for them to enter Gentile precincts. But even so they did not escape, for the governor brought Christ out to them, and in the end every man of them became His judge. God will have every common man who has known Christ to come to a decision about Him.—G. A. SMITH.

Silence under calumny is something more wonderful than miracles. These priests admire it not, because it confounds them; but a heathen is greatly affected by it.—QUESNEL.

THE DIVINE THRONE

And when they had crucified him, . . . they set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Matt. XXVII. 35, 37.

THE cross employed in capital punishment varied in its form, being sometimes simply a stake on which the sufferer was impaled, sometimes consisting of two pieces of timber put together in the form of a T or an X, sometimes in that familiar to us in Christian art as the Latin cross. In this instance, the fact that the title or superscription was placed over our Lord's head, implies that the last was the kind of cross employed. In carrying the sentence of crucifixion into effect, the cross was laid on the ground, the condemned man stripped and laid upon it. Sometimes he was simply tied ; sometimes, as here, nails driven through the hands and feet ; sometimes a projecting ledge was put for the feet to rest on ; sometimes the whole weight of the body hung upon the limbs that were thus secured. It was as the soldiers were thus nailing Him to the cross He prayed, " Father, forgive them."—E. H. PLUMPTRE.

It is with much propriety that St. Matthew calls this writing an *accusation* ; for it was false that ever Christ pretended to be KING OF THE JEWS, in the sense the inscription held forth : he was *accused* of this, but there was no proof of the accusation ; however, it was affixed to the cross.—A. CLARKE.

He held in His pierced hand the keys of paradise. He, whom they have condemned, appears as Himself the arbiter of life and death. He, whom they are crucifying as a blasphemer of God, bestows as the Son of God the privileges of adoption in the kingdom of

His Father. The cross has become a judgment-seat: the cross has become a throne!—THOLUCK.

Oh, the breasts of the Jews, more hard than the stones! The rocks are rent; but their hearts are hardened. The elements flee, the earth is shaken, the tombs are opened; yet the obduracy of the Jews remains unmoved, while the earth is moved.—AMBROSE.

Too many learned men, like Pilate, fix their Greek, Latin, and Hebrew *over* Christ's head, instead of putting it at His feet.—TOPLADY.

By what has Christianity subdued the world if not by its marvellous transmutation of suffering into triumph, of the crown of thorns into the crown of glory, and of a gibbet into a symbol of salvation? What does this mean, if not the death of death, the defeat of sin, the raising to the skies of voluntary sacrifice? By long brooding over this theme—the agony of the just, peace in the midst of agony, and the heavenly beauty of such peace—humanity came to understand that a new religion was born—a new mode, that is to say, of explaining life and of understanding suffering.

AMIEL.

The judgment-hall, and all the scenes of our Lord's condemnation and execution, were so many theatres, on which He acted, in the full eye of the world, divers parts of the sublimest virtue. He there expressed His spotless, matchless character. All the excellent virtues and graces, by the matter being thus ordered, in a degree most eminent, and in a manner most conspicuous, were demonstrated, to the praise of God's name, and the commendation of His truth, for the settlement of our faith and hope, for an instruction and encouragement to us, of good practice in those highest instances of virtue.—BARROW.

VICTORY

THE OPEN GRAVE

And the angel answered and said unto the woman, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which hath been crucified. He is not here; for he is risen, even as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

Matt. XXVIII. 5–6.

NO psychological analysis can enter into the interior spiritual process through which in the consciousness of the disciples their faithlessness in presence of the death of Jesus was changed into their conviction of His Resurrection. We can therefore only continue to stand by this: that for them, whatever the intervening means may have been, the Resurrection became to their consciousness a matter of fact, and possessed for them all the reality of a historical fact.—BAUR.

The fact of Christ's Resurrection is the only explanation of the existence and power of Christ's Church. No delusion, no pious imagination could give the security on which faith builds.—W. H. HUTTON.

There are travellers who go long distances in order to see the sepulchre who would not move an inch to see the Saviour. Such men are lovers of form, special places, extraordinary ceremonies. To see the sepulchre is what they come for; they would be afraid if they saw Him who had lain in it but some three days ago.—J. PARKER.

Christ is arisen,
  Joy to thee mortal!
Empty His prison,
  Broken its portal.
Rising, He giveth
  His shroud to the sod;
Risen, He liveth,
  And liveth to God. GOETHE.

THE GREAT COMMISSION

Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations.
Matt. XXVIII. 18–19.

THE express promise of our Lord, assuring us of the perpetuity of His Church, is embodied in His Holy Supper. For He commands that His Death should be "shown forth" and this Supper be administered, "until He come."—MELANCTHON.

Here is an inspiring motive of missionary zeal: it is the good pleasure of God to gather in all that every race or nation can supply towards the perfecting, or strengthening, or adorning of the temple of His Church. We ought to feel the enthusiasm of builders who are required to find a place in the temple for every jewel and stone of price, that every race and every age can produce. The real ground of missionary zeal is not only anxiety for the furtherance of God's sovereign will, but also a real readiness to enter delightedly into the magnificence of His thoughts.—R. L. OTTLEY.

Were the memory of this faith never so obscured, as indeed in every age the coarse passions and perceptions of the world do all but obliterate it in the hearts of most, yet in every pure soul, in every poet and wise man, it finds a new missionary, a new martyr, till the great volume of universal history is finally closed and man's destinies are fulfilled on this earth.—CARLYLE.

Only one institution in human society carries the dew of its youth; and through the conflict of the centuries still chants its morning song. It is the religion of Jesus.—IAN MACLAREN.

AN ANALYSIS OF THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW

BY

J. A. FINDLAY, M.A.

THE
THIRD
STUDY

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW

By J. A. Findlay, M.A.

Introduction

THIS title cannot be taken to mean "The Gospel by St. Matthew"; its author knew and used the Second Gospel, and Matthew the Apostle would not have called in the aid of John Mark, not himself one of the Twelve. Nor could Luke have referred as cavalierly as he does to attempts at gospel-writing prior to his own (Luke i. 1) if he had known of one made by one of the Twelve. While, however, we cannot ascribe the composition of the Gospel outright to Matthew, it is rightly called "according to Matthew," for it represents a Matthæan tradition.

Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis about the middle of the second century, is quoted by Eusebius as follows: "Matthew composed the logia"—I leave the word untranslated for the moment—"of the Lord in Aramaic, and everyone translated as best he could." By "the logia" he does not mean our Gospel; according to Semitic scholars, it is not translated from Aramaic.

It has generally been held that Papias is referring to a collection of the sayings of Jesus known to scholars as Q, and used freely both by Matthew and Luke. But do "logia" mean sayings of Jesus? In the N.T. and early Christian writings they are called not "logia," but "logoi" (cf. Acts xx. 35; 1 Thess. iv. 15). By "logia" are meant, says Burkitt, "testimonies," quotations from the O.T. treated as referring prophetically to Jesus. What Matthew did was to make an anthology of O.T. proof-texts. According to Luke xxiv. 25 f.,

32, 44, such proof-texts formed the staple of our Lord's teaching after His resurrection. This idea, it was believed, had the sanction of the Risen Lord Himself, and Matthew set himself to develop it. Paul in Rom. ix. 33 and Peter in 1 Pet. ii. 6 ff. deal with the same cluster of O.T. texts.

Neither is copying from the other; each is dependent on a Testimony-book compiled by an authority whom both would recognise. This suggestion explains two curious facts. Citations from different parts of the O.T. are sometimes mixed (as Malachi and Isaiah in Mark i. 2), and the wrong prophet's name is given (Mark i. 1; Matt. xxvii. 9). Writers are not looking up their references, for concordances were unknown; they are using a book of proof-texts, in which only the greater prophets' names were given. In Mark i. 1, 2 a mixed quotation, the first half of which comes from Malachi, is fathered on Isaiah, because a text from Isaiah follows it. In Matt. xxvii. 9 great Jeremiah has swallowed up little Zechariah. In each case the Testimony-book is responsible.

In this Gospel there are more citations from the O.T. than in Mark and Luke taken together; Matthew has 47, 23 of them peculiar to himself. These quotations provide the scaffolding for his book, and the action of its sections finds its climax in a " testimony "; so the Gospel got its name. There are seven such quotations in the prologue (chs. i.–iv.) and seven in the epilogue (chs. xxvi.–xxviii.); between these points there are five sections—Matthew's Testimony-book was probably divided into five sections—the limits of which are marked by a formula, beginning " When Jesus had finished " (vii. 28; xi. 1; xiii. 53; xix. 1; xxvi. 1); Luke has a similar phrase once

(vii. 1). The gospel was written by an unknown author in the latter half of the first century, and was called "according to Matthew" because Matthew's testimonies provided its outline, which the evangelist filled in by the help of Q, Mark's gospel, and material he had himself collected (we propose to call this M).

The phrase "to this day" (xxvii. 8; xxviii. 15) bespeaks a late date, probably after the fall of Jerusalem; xxii. 7 points in the same direction. The evangelist's purpose is to arm catechists against Jewish objectors (cf. xxviii. 15). In i. 19 ff. the slander that Jesus was illegitimate is dealt with. Joseph, we are told, was about to repudiate Mary, in accordance with Deut. xxiv. 1, when he was reassured by an angel in a dream (i. 19 ff.).

The Gospel is everywhere racy of Palestinian soil. Universalist in outlook, it is not detached from native loyalties. The evangelist's sympathies are with liberal Judaism. Dr. Abrahams thought that the word "lawyer" (xxii. 35) is used—here only in Matthew—to denote a scribe of liberal leanings. Such phrases as "the land of Israel" (ii. 20), "the city of the great King" (v. 35), "the holy city" (xxvii. 53), show that the writer, though strongly anti-Pharisaic, loves his motherland. Less severe upon Barabbas and Judas than the others, he is kinder to the twelve than either Mark or John. Palestine, Syria, or Egypt is the likeliest place of origin.

General Outline

Prologue (chs. i.—iv.)

The pedigree of Jesus, His birth, baptism, temptation, and the beginning of His Galilean ministry.

Section 1 (*chs. v.—vii.*)

Jesus depicted as teacher, His law fulfilling, but contrasted with, that of Moses.

Section 2 (*chs. viii.—x.*)

Jesus the Captain-Saviour (cf. Acts v. 31, for titles).

Section 3 (*chs. xi.—xiii.* 52).

Jesus the Wisdom and Word of God (the two are synonymous).

Section 4 (*chs. xiii.* 53—*xix.* 1)

Jesus the founder of the new Israel.

Section 5 (*chs. xix.—xxv.*)

Jesus the consummator of the world's history.

Epilogue (*chs. xxvi.—xxviii.*)

How the consummation was effected.

The five sections may be summarised as follows: What Jesus taught, what He did, what He was, the immediate and the final results of His coming. They are all suggested in the last verse of the Gospel (xxviii. 20): "*teaching* them (1) to observe all that I *commanded* you (2): and lo! *I* (3) *with you* (4) to the *consummation* of this world's history" (5).

Fuller Analysis

The Prologue (*chs. i.—iv.*)

The purpose of the pedigree is to prove the Messiahship of Jesus. It is arranged in three groups of fourteen generations. Three women of Gentile birth are introduced to show that Gentile blood flowed in His veins. Of course there is an inconsistency here. If He was not really the son of Joseph, the pedigree only proves legal parentage. The virgin birth is an integral part of this Gospel, and cannot be easily detached from its context, as in Luke. The original reading of i. 16 was probably: "Joseph, to whom was betrothed Mary

the virgin, begat Jesus, who was called Christ." The Septuagint translation (dating from the third century B.C.) of Isa. vii. 14, quoted in i. 23, was regarded by Jews as due to Christian tampering with its text, but Dr. Lukyn Williams has proved that *parthenos* is the natural Greek rendering of the *almah* of the Hebrew, and that the doctrine that the Messiah was to be born of a virgin is older than Christianity. The Gospel passes from "God with us" to "I with you" (i. 23; xxviii. 20).

The fact that wise men from the East came to the court of Nero in A.D. 66 and worshipped him as the sun-god Mithras has been thought of as the origin of the story in Matthew. This seems far-fetched; it may suggest that this was likely to happen in those days. The "star" has been identified by Kepler with the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in the constellation Pisces; this took place in May, 7 B.C., and was regarded as a sign of Messiah's advent. The Magi would arrive in 6 B.C. (winter); hence Herod's "two years old and under." The pagan writer Macrobius, fourth century A.D. (Rome), gives a list of puns made by famous people. When the Emperor Augustus heard of a massacre of children in Syria, in which "a king of the Jews" (that is, a natural son of Herod) had perished, he said, "I had rather be Herod's pig than his son." For the sojourn in Egypt we may quote the Talmudic story that Jesus took refuge in Egypt as an adult, and brought magical spells back with Him. The whole question should be studied in Ramsay's *Was Christ born at Bethlehem?*

"He shall be called Nazoraios" (ii. 23) creates a difficulty, as the words are not found in the O.T. It is perhaps at once a reference to Isa. xi. 1 ("a branch [*netzer*] from the stem of Jesse") and a play on the name

Nazareth (" Branch- " or " Flower-town "). Neither Josephus nor the Talmud mention Nazareth ; it was near to Sepphoris, the largest town in Galilee, and Josephus does not mention villages near a large town by name.

In ch. iii. Matthew joins Mark, and the only peculiarities in vers. 1–18 are : (*a*) Pharisees and Sadducees come together to John's baptism ; their association is strange, as they were bitter opponents, but they combined later on against Jesus. Perhaps they formed an unofficial deputation from the Sanhedrin. (*b*) " Carry his shoes " (ver. 11 : Mark has " unfasten his shoelatchet "). A rich man has a servant to carry his shoes when he goes out to dinner. (*c*) Matthew puts the words of the Heavenly Voice in the form " This is " (ver. 17) for " Thou art," making it a public declaration. (*d*) Matthew alone reports John's protest with the reply of Jesus (vers. 14, 15). When the Gospel was written, followers of John (cf. Acts xviii. 25) in Asia, Syria, and Egypt still declared that John was greater than Jesus, for the greater baptizes the less. Matthew answers that John felt this difficulty, but his doubts were set at rest by the assurance of Jesus that it was God's will that he should identify himself with the experiences of others. (N.B.—Jesus says " us," not " me.") " The Beloved " in ver. 17 means " My own."

In the Temptation-scene (ch. iv. 1–11) Matthew's order is more logical than Luke's (stones into bread, kingdoms of the world, pinnacle of the Temple). Jesus repudiates the rôle of universal provider and that of religious sensationalist, both of which would have appealed to the crowd ; He will offer the people neither bread nor wonders. He did multiply bread, did work miracles, but neither for its own sake, and neither in

detachment from others. Loaves are multiplied when all share round what each has got, miracles happen when we co-operate by faith; neither end is to be achieved for us, only with us. The third temptation suggests that the only alternative, if Jesus will not take the high way, is the low way of compromise; this unmasks the devil, and he is dismissed. To say that this was the invention of the Palestinian Church in the first century is to credit it with supernatural insight; it must have come from Jesus Himself, communicated perhaps to the disciples after the first prophecy of the passion. Every time Jesus is called "Son of God" or "Christ" He replies with "Son of Man." This is true in all the Gospels (Mark viii. 29, 30; Luke ix. 22; John i. 50, 51; Mark xiv. 61, 62; Luke xxii. 67 ff.); here we have the master-key to His secret.

The rest of the chapter, following Mark closely, launches Jesus on His Galilean ministry.

Section 1.—Jesus the Teacher (chs. v.—vii.)

Whether the whole sermon was spoken at the beginning of the ministry in Galilee is uncertain. Part of the same material is found in Luke vi. ("the Sermon on the level place"), viii., xi., xii., xiii., xvi. The "mountain" is the hill behind Capernaum; two-thirds of the way up there is a level place. Jesus may have gone up to the top to escape the crowds, then come down again to meet them. Four Beatitudes are peculiar to Matthew; Luke has four woes in their stead. Ver. 5 is probably to be omitted. There are textual reasons for suspecting its authenticity, and it spoils the sequence of seven.

In the whole discourse, the following verses are not found elsewhere: v. 5, 7, 8, 9, 14, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21–24, 27, 28, 31 (?), 33–37, 38, 41, 43; vi. 1–8, 16–18, 34; vii. 6, 15. Of these verses, v. 17 stood in some texts of Luke in Tertullian's time, for he charges Marcion with having dropped it from his edition; v. 19 is perhaps out of keeping with the general teaching of Jesus, and, like xxiii. 1, 2, represents Jewish Christian conservatism.

Outline of the Sermon

(1) Likely candidates for the Kingdom (v. 1–11). An appeal to such people (vers. 13–16), and a reassurance (vers. 17–20). Jesus has not come to alter the substance of the Mosaic law, but to extend its interpretation.

(2) Vers. 17–19 are now expanded in a comparison between the old religion and the new, in the course of which Jesus expounds the five leading principles of the law of Moses: the sacredness of (*a*) individual life (vers. 21–26), (*b*) home-life and sexual relations (vers. 27–32), (*c*) truth (vers. 33–37), (*d*) justice (vers. 38–42), (*e*) love of country (43–48).

(3) Ch. v. 20 is now expanded in ch. vi. into an examination of the difference between the *practice* of the way of life proclaimed by Jesus and current religious conventions. The believer's relations first with persons (vi. 1–18), then with things (vers. 19–34), is discussed. His relation to persons (vers. 1–18) is considered under three heads: almsgiving (duty to other men), prayer (to God), fasting (to oneself). They are not to be practised from a sense of duty, or with a view to acquiring merit, but are to be the outflow of the hidden life of the heart. *Things* (vers. 19–34) are considered under

the aspects of money, food, and dress. The way to secure these necessaries is not to concentrate upon their acquisition, but on the new way of life. Then they will come in as by-products.

(4) A description of the new society in its relation to (*a*) its own members (vii. 1–5), (*b*) outside critics (ver. 6), (*c*) its centre, Jesus (vers. 7–27). Not successful service, but unquestioning devotion to the will of God revealed in Him is to be the test of membership.

Some points in this outline call for fuller explanation.

(*a*) In section 2 (v. 17–48) the sixth commandment is applied to the whole personality. To be persistently angry with a brother-man is the mental counterpart of murder; it may be justifiable, as homicide may be justifiable, but the offending party must stand his trial. Contempt, more dangerous than anger, is equivalent to blasphemy; "raca" is the sound which the Oriental makes when he prepares to spit at some loathsome object. Still, in desperate cases even contempt, not for the man, but his conduct, might be defended. Abuse ("Thou fool" is a misleadingly tame translation) stands self-condemned. But (ver. 23) we are responsible also for what another man thinks of us. We are not to ignore his grievance against us, not even to worship God, while any avoidable dispute awaits settlement. Chances are given of settling most disputes; if they are missed, whatever happens to the other party (ver. 25), we shall pay the price. Here as in His next illustration, Jesus looks at a subject first from one side, then the other.

(*b*) Moses forbade adultery; Jesus tells us that to regard a woman as a mere tool of sex is seduction, an outrage upon her personality. But for the man obsessed by it a passion of this sort is dangerous.

Better live a maimed and thwarted life than lose your soul. A note is added about divorce, which is disallowed. Sex-relations are only tolerable when they set up a lifelong bond. The words "except for fornication"—peculiar to Matthew—may be taken as mitigating the disallowance of divorce, but may equally well mean: "I cancel the word [Deut. xxiv. 1] about misconduct before marriage."

(*c*) "Thou shalt not forswear thyself" means "Thou shalt not lie," for the Oriental swears when he wishes to be taken seriously. Truth is defined as sincerity, the absence of exaggeration for the sake of effect. "Heaven," "earth," "Jerusalem," your body itself, are all too sacred to be used as makeweights in the traffic of the market-place and the platform. The only legitimate emphasis is unadorned repetition.

(*d*) The law of public justice ("eye for eye," etc.) is not interfered with, but Jesus again carries the question into private life. Three illustrations are taken: (1) Where the offence is not serious enough for the law-court; the blow—with the back of the hand—on the *right* cheek stands for insult, not injury. Insults are to be ignored altogether. The purpose of justice is at once to stop the wrong and to restore the broken relationship; turning the other cheek would do both, for men soon weary of insulting the man who refuses to be insulted. (2) Where the other party has taken you to court, and public justice has proved unjust. "The adversary" (ver. 25) and "he that is evil" both stand for the foreign oppressor and his agent the money-lending publican. Their malice is to be countered by unexpected generosity. (3) Where the country is under martial law, as Galilee often was (ver. 41). Here not conscription to military service is

meant, but conscription by a foreign government to service which might involve fighting with one's own people, for the road along which the dispatches were to be carried might be ambushed. Doing this perilous work together, you and the official who has conscripted you should be drawn together; you should be glad to go a little farther to get to know this new friend better! The just thing is to be human; if not to give food or money, at least to treat all claimants in a human way (ver. 42).

(*e*) There is a higher patriotism, not displacing, but including, love of country, for the most enduring bond is that which binds you to every member of the race. God sends His rain and sunshine down on all His children, however badly they behave, for nothing can alter the fact that they are His children. So nothing can alter the fact that they are your brothers; treat them as you do members of your own family. So shall you be really human, as God is really divine.

One or two points in § 4 demand attention. Ch. vii. 6 seems harsh, but should not be rejected. Some people—cynical outsiders and scandal-mongers—do behave like dogs and swine. We should be free and friendly with everyone, but there are holy things—our jewels—we had best keep to ourselves. We shall not give either our Master or our brothers away in the presence of those who will exploit our indiscretions.

The parable of the two ways (vers. 13, 14) is common to Jewish and Greek proverbial philosophy. Luke (xiii. 24) has "door," where Matthew has "gate," Luke "strive" and "shall not be able" where Matthew has "few shall find." Again vii. 22 ff. is unlike either Luke vi. 46 or xiii. 26. In Luke Jesus says in effect, "No matter how much I have done for you," in Matthew

" No matter how much you have done for me "—" it does not follow that you are mine." In the parable of the housebuilders Matthew and Luke are nearer together, but Matthew's imagery is Palestinian, Luke's Syrian.

Luke has a shorter text of the Lord's Prayer (see R.V.) and of the Beatitudes. Matthew's additions are in the former case liturgical, in the latter explanatory. " Poor " is defined as " poor in spirit," " hungry " as " hungry . . . for righteousness." When Matthew has two written sources before him, he gives his reader both versions, when the saying quoted is found in both. We have " doublets " in v. 32 (Q), xix. 9 (Mark); v. 29, 30 (Q), xviii. 8, 9 (Mark); xvii. 20 (Q), xxi. 21 (Mark); x. 39 (Q), xvi. 25 (Mark).[1] In xii. 31, 32 they lie side by side.

Section 2.—Jesus the Captain-Saviour (chs. viii.—xi.)

Here Matthew follows Q, then Mark, then Q again; his strength lies in arrangement and emphasis. In chs. viii. and ix. we have first *three* cases of power to command disease, one from Q, the other two from Mark; they are summed up in a testimony (viii. 17).

Three instances of power to command the services of *men* follow; Matthew fills in his number by changing Mark's " they take Him as He was in the boat " (Mark iv. 36) to " and when He entered into the boat, His disciples followed Him " (viii. 23). He reserves the matter contained in Mark iv. 1–35 to a later section, and keeps back the story told in Mark ii. 1–12 to chap. ix. These alterations are deliberate, and fit into his scheme. In the stilling of the storm (viii. 24 ff.) Jesus is revealed as master of natural forces, in the cure of

[1] The " source " in brackets after the reference in each case.

the demoniacs as master of supernatural forces. In ch. ix. His power is exercised, first in the *moral* life of the individual (vers. 1–8), then in that of the community (vers. 9–17). Next (vers. 18–25) death itself, to which the physical and the moral life of individual and community alike lead up, withdraws before Him. The secret of His power is found in His compassion (ver. 36)—this is one of the master-ideas of the Gospel —and (*in chap.* 10) its supreme exercise in His ability to endow other men with His own power and His own compassion. So he *finishes* by commanding His twelve disciples (xi. 1).

Section 3.—*Jesus the Wisdom and Word of God* (*xi.* 1—*xiii.* 52)

This deals with the question " Who, then, is this Jesus ? " and begins with the message of John the Baptist from prison (Q). In reply Jesus sums up the contents of the last section, and contrasts Himself with John. A hint as to the disclosure to be made in chap. xiii. is given in ver. 19 : " Wisdom is vindicated by her works." We have been concerned so far with the " works " of Jesus ; now they are brought into connection with " Wisdom " ; the same note dominates the next few verses. That the lakeside towns were indifferent to His presence among them bespoke a hardness which could only end in ruin. The passage from Q (xi. 25–27 ; cf. Luke x. 22) sets before us once and for all His unique mission, and associates it, as in the former section, with His pity for the heavy-laden. The invitation to which it leads up is peculiar to Matthew, and proves that our evangelist had access to authentic traditions of the word of Jesus of which

Luke knew nothing. No one would suggest that it did not come from Jesus Himself. With it we take another step on the way to the disclosure for which we are being prepared. Its terms recall the cry of the Heavenly Wisdom in the Wisdom-books (Prov. viii. and ix., Ecclesiasticus, the Wisdom of Solomon). There " Wisdom " is pre-existent with God before all worlds, His agent in creation. Her delight is with the sons of men, and she is ever calling them, as a hen calls to her chickens (Matt. xxiii. 37). Like Jesus, she " is initiated into the knowledge of God " (Wisd. viii. 4 ; Matt. xi. 25), and yet her appeal is to the simple. In Ecclesiasticus we find the words " Come unto her . . . for . . . you shall find her rest."

The power of Jesus is obviously more than human, but two alternatives are still open : it may come from above, or from beneath. In ch. xii. the latter alternative is examined and rejected, but we do not reach this point till ver. 24, where an insinuation, whispered already (ix. 34), comes into the open. In vers. 1–23 the power of Jesus is displayed once more in defence of the rights of man. His royal humanity has been suggested in ix. 6, and is brought out clearly here. The Sabbath is not meant only for rest or worship, but for service to man (ver. 12). In vers. 17 ff. the portrait of Jesus is rounded off by a testimony (cf. viii. 17). Captain of life as He was, He was no blustering tyrant ; He was always gentle with the weak, and *Gentiles* (N.B. the universalist note again) are to set their hope on Him (cf. iv. 15, 16 and xxviii. 19).

Then follows the refutation of the theory that He is inspired by the power of darkness. Jesus first exposes its absurdity, then examines the condition of its advocates. If all exorcism, He says, is inspired by

the devil, the younger scribes who are themselves practising it (ver. 27) are also devil-possessed. The truth is that the strong man has met a stronger. Any other suggestion was an exploitation of the ignorance of superstitious people by men who knew better. If it had been a mistake, due to the unfamiliar title " Son of Man," it might have been pardonable ; as it was, it was a blasphemy against the Spirit of God. Such evil things could only come from bad minds. If, however, their defence was that it was merely an " idle word " (ver. 36), let them beware ; precisely in such random insinuations real motives come out. Here was one more than a prophet, greater than Solomon (the incarnation of Wisdom) ; the fact that they could be guilty of such a slander about Him proved them possessed by seven spirits of evil worse than pagan vice (vers. 44, 45).

The chapter closes with the foiling of another attempt to silence Jesus, and the note of tragedy begins to be heard.

In ch. xiii. we come to the parables of the Kingdom. The parable of the sower is followed not, as in Mark, by that of the seed growing secretly, but by that of the tares, which reverts to the problem set by the Beelzebul-slander. Such libels cannot be accounted for after all by human depravity ; " an enemy hath done this." Believers are not to try to extirpate the guilty parties, but leave them alone (xv. 14). Time will show with whom victory is to lie.

There are seven parables of the Kingdom in Matthew. As in the case of the Beatitudes, where " Blessed are you " (v. 11) applies the seven preceding blessings to the disciples, so xiii. 52 applies the seven preceding parables to them.

The parable of the sower introduces the series, that of the learned disciple closes it. The six between arrange themselves in pairs. As the parable of the tares discusses the problem of evil in the world outside the Church—"the field is the world"—that of the drag-net treats that of evil *in the Church*. We are not to extirpate evil by destroying the men who perpetrate it, but we are *immediately* to excommunicate worthless members of the Church. Perhaps vers. 49, 50 have been repeated by mistake from the conclusion of the parable of the tares, for the point of the drag-net simile is that the fishermen do what the farmers' men are forbidden to do. The parable of the mustard-seed illustrates the outward growth of the Kingdom, that of the leaven its inward permeation of the whole life of man.

In the twin-parables of the hid treasure and the pearl of great price (vers. 44, 45) the secret is at last disclosed. They are not mere duplicates, for in the first the Kingdom is the treasure found, in the second it is the finder. Like "Wisdom," Jesus is at once sought and seeker, and is Himself the Kingdom, life's secret and its master-key. To make Him his own a man must be ready to surrender his all, but Jesus has already sacrificed His all to buy this treasure, the love of which the heart of man is capable.[1]

The clue to the whole series of parables is found, as usual, in a testimony (xiii. 35); secrets hid from the beginning are now being "blurted out." Matthew has turned Mark's statement as to the reason for speaking in parables inside-out. Mark (iv. 11, 12) implies that

[1] It would be worth the reader's while to study the word "find" in this Gospel and classify passages like vii. 14; x. 39; xi. 30; xiii. 44, 45; xviii. 13; xx. 6; xxii. 9, 10; xxvii. 32, under the heads of "found" and "finder."

they were meant to *veil* truth from the unthinking; Matthew that they were meant to *unveil* truth which could only be disclosed even to the thoughtful in parable. The householder (ver. 52) is the man learned in the lore of the old world who makes the discovery, and gladly goes to school again. He is set up for life, and can cater for all comers. The new discovery comes out first, but he can set it off by putting the old beside it. He sees the old forecast the new, the new illumine the old.

Section 4.—*Jesus breaks away from the Old Synagogue and founds the New* (*xiii.* 53—*xix.* 1)

We begin with a visit to Nazareth, resulting in a final severance from early connections. Matthew alters Mark's "He could not do any mighty work" (Mark vi. 5) to "He did not do many mighty works" (xiii. 58), and passes over the surprise of Jesus. Then follows the murder of John the Baptist, and some of his disciples take refuge with Jesus (xiv. 12), whose feasting when their master was in prison they had criticised (ix. 14).

As the old associations drop away, new ones are formed, and the feeding of the five thousand follows—a new kind of sacramental meal, where women eat with men and men wait on women (vers. 19, 21). Matthew alone reports here and in xv. 36 the presence of women and children, and omits all reference to teaching. In both cases he emphasises the pity of Jesus for crowds (xiv. 14; xv. 32). But they are not ready for such fellowship, and Jesus sends them home one way, and the disciples another; John vi. 15 tells us the reason why.

Hope of a mass-movement of Jews faded out of the

mind of Jesus that night; could He trust his own disciples? They had evidently been privy to the attempt to make Him king. Was the boat he had launched on the world's sea foundering? The wind was certainly against Him (ver. 24). He looks down at the lake; there is the image of His thoughts, and He goes to their rescue. Whether He actually walked on the water, we do not know; only Matthew says in so many words that He did. The point of the story is not the miracle, if miracle there was, but the fact that one man—Peter—dares to risk everything to be with Jesus. This fragment (from M) is a parable of Peter's adventurous life with Jesus.[1]

Work in Galilee is now almost impracticable; when Jesus lands on the western shore, healing is hurried and wholesale (vers. 35, 36), and the Pharisees attack Him again in chap. xv. He replies by separating Himself altogether from the old synagogue, bidding His disciples hereafter leave their old teachers alone (ver. 14); Judaism is a plant His Father has not planted (ver. 13—Matthew only). So the attempt to build a bridge between the old and the new (vers. 17–19) is abandoned; the scribes are preoccupied with the outsides of things, He works from inside (vers. 19, 20).

Having failed with Judaism, Jesus turns to the Gentiles in the neighbourhood of Tyre. There an adventurous woman joins Peter, the adventurous man; Matthew calls her a "Canaanite," because she was outside the old Church, and tells the story more fully than Mark. Matt. xv. 24 has been taken as narrowing the ministry of Jesus to lost sheep in Israel, and classed

[1] The reader should put the "Come to Jesus" passages together, as the "seek and find" passages have been collected; he will find hid treasure if he does: they are ix. 10; xi. 28; xiv. 12, 28, 29; xxv. 36.

with x. 5, 23 as proving that M (the matter peculiar to Matthew) is pervaded by Palestinian parochialism.

But the words in Aramaic may mean the opposite : " I was not sent except to these sheep, lost from the house of Israel," or " These are the people I have come here for " (cf. John x. 16). Because Jesus discouraged His disciples from preaching to Gentiles, it does not follow that He accepted the same limitation Himself ! The second saying (ver. 26) may also be read in another way, for there was a current proverb : " It is not right to take the bread which the children fling to their pet-dogs." In other words, " I should hate to be a parasite, fawning for scraps." Taken so, the words imply a rebuke to the woman for cringing ; anyone who has seen an Eastern woman beg will appreciate its point.

In ver. 29 Jesus returns to the lake of Galilee, but not to its western shore. Here a crowd comes to Him ; that many of them were Gentiles—the population on the eastern side was mainly Gentile—is suggested by ver. 31 (" they glorified the God of Israel "). The evangelist's heart is in this passage ; ver. 31 has an unmistakable lilt. So Jesus enters into sacramental relations with Gentiles ; He would not have repeated the experiment of chap. xiv. if they had been Jews from Galilee. But even here the Pharisees follow and pester Him for a " sign " ; xvi. 2, 3 (except " and He answered and said to them ") is absent from the best texts. The " sign of Jonah " is appropriate, if Jesus had just been visiting Gentiles, for that is what the book of Jonah is about. A further warning against the contagion of the Pharisees follows, as in Mark, but here " the Sadducees " appear as well (vers. 6, 12), and yet another retreat.

The lakeside region has now become impossible, and Jesus goes further afield to lay the first stone of the new

synagogue. The strangeness of xvi. 18 is mitigated if we read with the Old Syriac version, here and in xviii. 18, "synagogue" for "Church." With this reading the text may be defended as primitive, for the Church ceased to be called "synagogue" very soon. Paul claims the same first-hand inspiration in Gal. i. 16 ("flesh and blood" and "reveal" in both places), and it has been urged that Matt. xvi. 18 is an attempt to show that Peter, not Paul, is *the* authentic apostle. But the argument is double-edged; it is more likely that Paul has in mind the tradition underlying Matthew and is equating himself with Peter. Protestant endeavours to distinguish between "Petros" and "petra" will not hold good, for the difference is unknown in Aramaic. The Roman claim must be countered on other grounds.

The new synagogue thus founded, Jesus tells the Twelve (ver. 21) what must follow before the building is complete. Peter protests and is sharply reproved, but Matthew translates "Satan" in such a way as to take the sting out of the word; "thou art a stumbling-block to Me" (ver. 23) is a translation of "Satan"—the corresponding word in Arabic still means somebody who is getting in the way.

At the Transfiguration (ch. xvii.) we watch Moses and Elijah fade away and "Jesus only" left, and by his side Peter, James, and John. Peter is afraid that, as Moses and Elijah disappeared in those eastern hills, Jesus too is going to leave them, and they will have to go home alone; they feel out in the cold, and Jesus draws them in (ver. 7, Matthew only). How helpless they are without Him is shown in the scene that follows, but Matthew's genius shines out brightly in ver. 20, where he inserts the mountain-saying in its ideal context. The nine had spent a harrassing morning, some watching

the mountain-side which parted them from Jesus, others taking their turn at trying to keep the father of the epileptic boy going a little longer. When Jesus does come back, He tells them that faith would have moved the mountain!

The next M passage comes in vers. 24–29; its purpose is to suggest how the new synagogue is to treat the old, in the interval before the fall of Jerusalem. They are not to cause needless offence, for time will show how free they are. We need not make a miracle of this fisherman's joke.

Chap. xviii. treats of the relations of members of the new synagogue with one another. They are a miscellaneous company, and forbearance must be exercised with the "little ones." The right of excommunication (ver. 18) is guarded, but its harshness is qualified by the parable of the lost sheep (Q); by his ejection the offender becomes the lost sheep, to be won back again. Vers. 10, 14, 15–20 are peculiar to Matthew. The rest of the chapter must be assigned to M, and dwells on the need of endless forgivingness; Luke xvii. 3 is very different.

Section 5.—The Result of the Coming of Jesus (chs. xix.—xxv.)

The dominant note of this section is that of catastrophic upheaval; like the others it begins quietly. Jesus now takes the decisive step, and leaves Galilee for Judæa and the Cross. In the interval before the drama proper begins, we are told that three groups, who had no equal footing in the old Church, are to have special consideration in the new: they are married women, celibates, and children. In this passage xix. 10–12 are M. There are three reasons, we are told,

why men and women may have to be single ; they are physical or temperamental disqualification (" they are born so "), hard circumstance, and vocation.

The contrast between Jesus and Paul on this point is striking. Paul makes allowance for those who must get married (1 Cor. vii. 8, 9), Jesus for those who must remain unmarried ; Jesus is the Jew, Paul in this matter the Greek. In the rest of ch. xix. Matthew follows Mark, but the note of surprising reversal is maintained throughout. The young ruler is one of the first who must become last before he can inherit eternal life. The phrase " first last . . . last first," repeated twice (xix. 30 ; xx. 16), gives us the key to every detail in this section. Matthew is offended at Mark's " Why callest thou Me good ? " and alters it (R.V.) to " Why askest thou Me concerning the good ? " A similar phrase in Mark, seeming to cast a reflection on Jesus, is changed (xiii. 58 ; cf. Mark vi. 5) ; the best texts of Matt. xxiv. 36 drop the words " neither the Son " for the same reason.

The parable of the labourers in the vineyard (M, xx. 1–16) shows that ultimately there will be no first or last. The last comers are first served because they left their reward to their employer. All alike, whether they had come in at the beginning or later on, but as soon as they could (xx. 7, 8), are to enter into their Master's joy ; that is reward enough (cf. also xxv. 21, 23 in contrast with Luke xix. 17, 19).

In vers. 20 ff. Matthew alone tells us that it was *the mother* of the sons of Zebedee who came with their request. This gives point to the Western and Syriac reading of ver. 24 (cf. Mark x. 40), " for *others* it has been prepared by my Father." Not James and John, but two outcasts, were nearest to Jesus in His great

hour, and " the mother of the sons of Zebedee " was watching (Matthew emphasises this in xxvii. 56)—another surprise !

Matthew adds to Mark's account of the Triumphal Entry a testimony from Zechariah, and, in accordance with the letter of his text, makes Jesus ride into Jerusalem on two asses ! Evidently he was not a Hebrew scholar ! Ver. 11 gives us a touch of nature : the Galileans do not call Jesus the Messiah, but " *our* prophet." The cleansing of the Temple is told briefly, but Matthew adds his touch of insight. Jesus clears out the rubbish of the shambles, then sweetens the place by introducing into it the singing children, and healing the blind and lame (vers. 12–17) ; He is never merely destructive. According to Matthew the fig-tree withers immediately (ver. 19) ; Mark (xi. 20) makes the disciples notice its condition as they pass in the evening. Here is heightening of miracle, or parable turned miracle (cf. Luke xiii. 6 ff.). Up to ver. 28 Matthew follows Mark, but then he inserts a parable obscured by various readings. Its meaning is clear : the publicans, who made no profession, had, by their acceptance of John's baptism, done the will of the Father rather than the Pharisees. But this has been confused by a succession of Eastern copyists, who could not think that anyone who said " No " to his father could be a dutiful son. Again we have the same lesson, " the first shall be last ! " *A " testimony "* (21, 42) *again gives us the clue to the section.*

In ch. xxii. we have the parable of the man without the wedding-garment (M), reminiscent of Luke xiv. 16 ff., but emphasising not so much the unlikely people who came into the banquet as the fact that one man was turned out. To refuse a garment offered by your king

is, in the Near East, high treason; the reference to Judas is plain, specially as the offender is called "Comrade" (cf. xxvi. 50). He is warned that, unless he changes his ways, he will have to go out into the dark, as indeed he did (John xiii. 30). Matthew always stresses moral, Luke physical and social differences (cf. Matt. xxii. 10; Luke xiv. 21). "Worthy" is a characteristic Matthæan word (cf. xxii. 8; x. 11, 12, 13, 37, 38 with parallels in Luke).

In ch. xxiii. Matthew has collected seven woes on the Pharisaic scribes; vers. 1, 2 revert to the standpoint of v. 17–19, and is out of place after xv. 14. Most of the rest of the chapter is parallel to passages in Luke, and should be labelled Q; M passages are vers. 8–10, 15, 16–22 (cf. v. 33–35). In ver. 27 (Luke xi. 44) Matthew has the topical allusion right; idolatrous kings had been buried in the temple-precincts, and their tombs were whitewashed every spring, that worshippers might not incur defilement by treading on them. We should leave out the word "desolate" in ver. 38 (with the best MSS.) and read on into ch. xxiv.: "Therefore your house is left you. . . . And Jesus left the temple. . . . Not one stone shall be left on another." Temple and city are to be destroyed, because Jesus left them (cf. xxvii. 32).

This Gospel begins with a murder (ii. 16 ff.), its action turns on a murder (xiv. 10), and it leads up to the crowning murder. "All the blood" shed from the first murder to the last is to come upon "this generation," and the clouds are rolling up already. It is all summed up in xxvii. 7: "the field of blood, to bury strangers in." Here is the world's desire come to His own at last, and He is a stranger. What are we to do with Him? Let us bury Him out of sight, as we have done all the other

prophets! Jesus is the stranger who was no stranger, the stranger whom they buried, but who could not be buried! This brings us to

The Problem of Eschatology

Clearly Jesus expected a consummation, at which the wrong done at Cavalry should be redressed. He did not know when it would come, but that it would come He was sure. To miss that consummation would be to find oneself in "outer darkness," to share it to "enter into the joy" of the Lord. Nowhere does He speak of "age-long punishment" for the individual, for Matthew xxv. 46 refers not to single men, but to nations (ver. 32) and for nations age-long punishment is a fact of history. Through these chapters (xxiv. and xxv.) there runs indeed a double thread. Individuals must prepare for the great hour when the Son of Man will come, and two attitudes towards it are condemned. One is to ignore it altogether, like the wicked servant (xxiv. 48 ff.), the other to be so preoccupied with it as to think of nothing else (xxv. 14 ff.). The right attitude is described in xxv. 1 ff., where the "oil" in reserve stands for the inward life of love—longing for the coming of the bridegroom—a secret which cannot be passed from one to another, or worked up when wanted.

But nations are also involved. As the section moves on with its surprises for one set of individuals after another, the nations are seen to be gathering before the Son of Man, who came in His own person only to one generation, but comes to all in the person of His poor brothers (cf. xxvi. 11), and all are judged by the compassion or lack of it exhibited in their laws and public opinion. We are all in the picture; in every

age the Son of Man is crucified, for He is human compassion incarnate. One of the master-thoughts of the Gospel has run out (cf. viii. 17; ix. 36) to its conclusion.

The Epilogue (chs. xxvi.—xxviii.)

All the words are finished; now for deeds. In ch. xxvi. in the scene at Bethany we have a lull before the storm. Another quiet scene—in the upper room—follows, but the darkness is creeping nearer. Meanwhile two things are to go on shining through the dark: Mary's gift, symbol of the love of the few for Jesus, and the bread and wine, symbol of His love for them. In the hour of quiet love-tokens are exchanged, then suddenly the storm rises. Judas sells his Master to death, then realises what he has done, and goes out to suicide. Peter is asleep when he should have been awake, tries to fight when he should have been quiet, an hour or two later he is frantically saying what he does not mean. Then he too realises what he has done. Only Jesus knows where He is going.

Dr. Abrahams has shown that the phrase "thou sayest" or "hast said" (xxvi. 25, 64; xxvii. 11; Luke xxii. 70; John xviii. 37) does not mean "yes" or "no"; it repeats the words of the question. When Judas says, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" Jesus answers, "Surely not!" (xxvi. 25). When the high-priest says, "Art thou the Christ, the Son of God?" Jesus replies, "The Christ . . . you say!" "But I say to you . . ." Mark (xiv. 62) has "I am"; Matthew (xxvi.) "you said," and Luke (xxii. 70), "*You say that I am.*" Two evangelists agree against one that Jesus did not, in so many words, acknowledge His Messiahship even at the end. Mark xiv. 62 is the only place in the

Synoptic Gospels in which He openly avows it! Clearly "the Son of Man" did not mean Messiah to the general public. In xxvi. 50 Jesus says to Judas, "Comrade, wherefore art thou come?" This translation has been confirmed by the discovery of five cups, all dating from the first century, and coming from the Near East, with the motto round their foot, identical in each case: "Comrade, wherefore art thou come? Rejoice." Jesus is quoting the motto from the loving-cup from which Judas had been drinking with Him an hour or two before! This cannot have been invented; we gather that Jesus talked Greek at least to Judas.

To the words of Institution (ver. 28) Matthew adds "for the remission of sins," omitting them where John's baptism is concerned (iii. 1, 2, cf. Mark i. 4). The blood of Jesus does what the water of baptism failed to do.

Ch. xxvii. begins with a group of men plotting to get rid of the disturbing stranger, and bringing upon themselves a power of darkness which carries them and the world they represent down to a doom of which none of them dreamed. In ver. 3 it has come upon Judas; the words "knowing that *he* was condemned" might refer to Jesus or to Judas; if Jesus is meant (as seems likely), Judas had not expected Him to be condemned, and the way is open for a charitable view of his motives. Matthew's account of the traitor's end seems more likely than the grotesque story in Acts i. 18; the actual facts would not have come out during the first few weeks. Judas tries to push the doom on to the priests, they back on to him. Next Pilate's wife comes under the shadow, for the house is haunted where the dark deed was done (ver. 19). Then Pilate becomes melodramatic, and washes his hands; we think of Lady

Macbeth. Last of all, " all the people " shout, " His blood be upon us, and our children ! " How this self-invoked curse came home to roost forty years later we may leave Josephus to tell. For the clouds are breaking already. This reckless cry is meant to suggest to us that the curse has become a blessing ; how we shall see in the sequel.

At the Cross the darkness had lifted from the others, and come down upon Jesus ; *His* cry of despair rings out. Then at last His spirit is set free, the water and blood which is to haunt the world with its redeeming power. The world is haunted by hate and by love ; the self-sacrificing love of Jesus has turned murder into healing, doom into redemption. The Vatican MSS. (B) inserts between vers. 49 and 50 the words, " and another taking a spear pierced his side, and there came out water and blood." This reminds us of John xix. 34, but whereas in John " blood and water " flow from the side of Jesus after death, in this text of Matthew's the stroke is the crowning outrage which sets the crucified spirit of human compassion free to redeem its murderers.

The chapter ends quietly, and precautions taken by the authorities to keep Jesus buried are reported, to refute a Jewish slander. The story of the earthquake and the resurrection of the saints conveys the atmosphere of prodigy which always accompanies the death of the great. In ch. xxviii. the sun is shining. Probably in vers. 10–20 we have the lost ending of Mark edited by Matthew. The reading of ver. 19 has been doubted. Baptism, in the Acts and Paul, is in the name of Jesus, and Eusebius has Matt. xxviii. 19 in two forms, " in my name," and as in our text. 2 Cor. xiii. 13 suggests that the Trinitarian formula was well known, and it

has not come there out of Matthew! The formula was liturgical, and has found its way into Matthew and Paul from Jesus. A further question has been raised about "make disciples of all the nations." Would there have been difficulty about the baptism of Gentiles if a word of Jesus could have been quoted? But in the case of Cornelius it was not the legality of preaching to Gentiles, but of eating with them, that was at issue; Matt. xxviii. 19 would not cover this. Jewish Christians would not object to Gentiles becoming disciples; they would mean by that doing what the earliest disciples did, obeying essential requirements of the law first. In any case, the universalist note has been sounded from the beginning of the Gospel (iv. 15, 16), and these verses sum up its contents.

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